

*CZECHS  
AGAINST GERMANS*

Philip Paneth



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## EDWARD BENES TO NEVILLE CHAMBERLAIN

At this moment in which the British people are obliged to wage a war imposed on Poland, Great Britain and France by Nazi Germany, I wish to express with deep and unalterable feelings of sympathy the desire and the decision of the Czechs and Slovaks to join without hesitation your people in this struggle for a free Europe.

Our country is invaded and occupied by armed forces of Nazism and the whole nation is suffering under inhuman terror and oppression. Its forces, however, both moral and physical, remain intact.

We Czecho-Slovak citizens consider ourselves as being also in war with the German military forces and we shall march with your people till the final victory and the liberation of our fatherland.

## AUTHOR'S PREFACE

*In these days of lightning coups and faits accomplis, when what might normally be a century of history may be packed into three months, the path of the chronicler of events is beset with difficulties. Many day to day occurrences in the international political scene which appear at present to be of the greatest significance, may well be obscured by time, while an event which was news last week and is forgotten this week, obliterated by ever-fresh headlines, may in the long run prove to be a milestone in history.*

*The people of Czechoslovakia, along with the Allies, are playing an important part in the present European conflict and it is my firm conviction that the Czechoslovak nation will be a factor of even greater significance when peace is once again established. The outbreak of war which deprived the British 'man in the street', the shaper of British public opinion to whom my book is addressed, of his wistful dream of peace and prosperity, has however brought closer to realisation the dream of the Czechoslovak people. It has been my aim to examine in these pages the processes which led up to the destruction of the Republic and the courageous struggle the Czechs are at present waging against their Nazi oppressors. With direct methods of resistance denied them, they have shown by means of subterranean activity and sabotage that the free Czech spirit is still dominant and will eventually reassert itself.*

*Although I may sometimes in this book appear critical, this does not in any way affect my firm faith in the resurrection of the democratic Czechoslovak Republic and my friendship and admiration for its peoples. Furthermore, this is a story*

## AUTHOR'S PREFACE

*which should be of interest to the British if only because the peace that will ultimately be concluded between the Czechoslovaks and Germany—a different Germany from that of Hitler—will also mean peace between Britain and that other Germany.*

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## *Chapter One*

### INTRODUCTION .

THOSE ACQUAINTED WITH THE MENTALITY OF THE BRITISH know that they are not unduly given to discussion. The Russians, when they were filled with Nihilist ideas which afterwards developed into Communism, discussed any and every problem, and Tsarist students would even commit suicide to prove the strength of their convictions. But the Englishman concentrates upon realities and is not willingly led into theoretical debates. Thus, whenever I have attempted to discuss the Czech question in English circles, I have always encountered an embarrassed smile or stern resistance. Occasionally the point of view of British interests would be put forward, but for the most part it was objected that the Czechs, unlike the Poles were unwilling to defend themselves. The Czech Government was fully prepared militarily but it did not wish to wage a hopeless struggle against a far superior opponent. A struggle of a different kind is, however, still being waged by precisely those people who had not wanted to fight. Those who have followed the pronouncements of the exiled leaders of the Czech movement know that the Czechs never gave up hope and that they will continue to fight until their country's freedom is regained. In a recent statement, the Czech Minister in London, Jan Masaryk, said:

‘Europe cannot have a Versailles every twenty years We should now strain every muscle to save Europe Czechoslovakia to-day is suffering perhaps a little more

than she deserves, but I am not sentimental about it. We were one corner of the chess-board. . . .

‘When the day comes when right triumphs over might, we shall hand in our little bill. It will not be a complicated one. My plan for the future is a free nation of Czechs and Slovaks in a free Europe.’

The Czechs have not confined themselves to peaceful methods in their struggle. Before the War broke out the fight was carried on underground cleverly and courageously. Whilst the Czech representatives in the Democratic countries, especially in Great Britain, had to abstain from political activity in order to cause no difficulties for their respective Governments, millions of Czechs abroad continued the fight with the aid of friends and sympathisers. They no longer had at their disposal their army of two million men with its excellent military equipment; political associations were forbidden; and all efforts at political or cultural organisation within Czechoslovakia were made impossible by the German secret police. Freedom of speech and the Press belonged to the past; all persons politically active or in any way suspect were placed under strict surveillance. But the national idea of independence was continually receiving new impetus, opening up fresh possibilities of development. The faith of the people was so powerful and so profound, that no Draconian measures could extinguish it. It was obvious that the Czech question was still far from settled.

Hitler’s invasion of Czechoslovakia was regarded by the world as a fact which nothing could change. It was

received with protest, but also with resignation. The Czech population in Bohemia and Moravia, however, do not regard their subjection as a permanent condition. The scanty news from Prague already shows that while there are no open revolts or bloody skirmishes as in Abyssinia, there is seething discontent in the Protectorate, a volcano which the Germans will never extinguish.

The Czechs have already had experience of this type of struggle. Before 1919 they strove to free themselves from the grip of the ramshackle Austro-Hungarian Empire. During the War of 1914-18, the Austro-Hungarian military administration hanged dozens of fighters for freedom for espionage and treason, and placed on them placards with the words: 'This is what we do to traitors and spies.' These terrifying measures did not damp the patriotism of the Czechs. On the contrary, the Czechs merely became more cautious in their underground activities against the Dual Monarchy. The Vienna Government had a whole horde of spies in Prague and the rest of Bohemia, whose task was to bring the guilty ones before the courts-martial. Thus the Czechs are no strangers to persecution. The men who at that time stood by the cradle of the Czecho-Slovak Republic are still to-day among the most zealous exponents of the Czech idea and the new Czech youth has grown up in the spirit of the Republic. The means at their disposal to-day are much greater and the political idea, too, has taken root in the soil of reality; it is no longer Utopian, but a political project the realisation of which is a question only of time and perseverance.

At the birth of the Czech Republic the Czechs themselves had only a vague conception of their future political life. Most of them had declared themselves satisfied with autonomy and it was only during the last years of the dual Monarchy that the desire for complete political independence came to fruition. The Emperor Charles, the last Hapsburg, had wished to grant far-reaching privileges to the minorities under his rule, but it was too late. Political independence was on the march in the Succession States. The Hapsburgs had never understood the mentality of the many nations they ruled. The Emperor Franz Joseph, the 'most capable ruler of the last century', moved only gradually away from the Austrian Dualism and thereby dug the grave of his own dynasty. His predecessor, the Emperor Joseph the Second, had obtained in Prague some insight into the mentality of the Czech people and had tried to understand it. The Czechs, however, had behind them the memory of their own Royal House, of which Georg Podjebrad was an outstanding member.

The cultural stagnation to which the Czechs had been condemned for nearly three hundred years, had depressed them into a nation which, although it lived on its own soil, had so few rights that it could make no progress economically. Not until the middle of the last century did the standard of living of the Czechs begin to improve through the systematic industrialisation of Bohemia. The Czechs then began to occupy an important economic position. They only obtained real leadership in economic life, however, after the War. In the twenty years of their

independence they gave the world an example of a real and efficient Democracy.

The Czech people was the most advanced of the Slav races. It was the cultural exponent of the Slav idea, without subscribing to the Pan-Slavism which was at one time the nightmare of Europe. In the Republic it developed its beloved language and its cultural virtues, a fact which produced much bitterness among the Sudeten Germans. The Czechs could easily have removed the opposition of these people if they had been willing to surrender their liberal and Democratic tradition. President Masaryk attempted to reconcile the Germans and the Czechs. In the twenty years of the Republic's existence leading Germans and Czechs had vainly striven to bring about an understanding, but the Germans could never forget that they had once been masters of the country. And they wanted to be so again.

The extreme measures that the officials of the German Protectorate have been forced to take, and the tremendous internal difficulties which the Germans are experiencing in the Czech provinces, all go to show that Democracy cannot easily be suppressed. In the conflict between Democracy and Fascism, the former will survive, for it arises from an impulse of nature which—even in Germany—cannot be suppressed for ever. All man's striving, especially when he is suffering oppression, guides him to that highest attainment of humanity—Freedom.

It is perhaps interesting to recall here that the Czech members of the Bohemian Diet issued the following

protest against the annexation of Alsace-Lorraine in 1871 :

‘ To settle the rights of nations by the sword would mean to deny to the weakest all their rights ; it would mean acknowledging the justification of those who act with most brutality ; it would mean introducing permanently a state of war among nations and sacrificing freedom and human dignity to the most barbaric of military despotisms as well as surrendering the most valued assets of human civilisation.

‘ If therefore the German nation took steps to deprive the French nation of a part of its territory, the inhabitants of which are French in sentiment and wish to remain so, it would commit an outrage upon this people’s freedom and would replace justice by violence.

‘ The Czech nation feels compelled to express its most fervent sympathy for France, which is to-day vindicating its independence and defending its national soil, which has rendered such great services to civilisation and to which we owe the greatest progress achieved in the principles of humanity and freedom.

‘ The Czech nation is convinced that to humiliate a great and heroic nation by seizing a part of its territory is to sow the seeds of fresh wars and thus of fresh harm to humanity and civilisation. The Czech nation is small, but its honour and its courage are not small. It would blush with shame if by its silence it permitted it to be thought that it approves of injustice or that it does not dare to protest against injustice. The Czech people desires to be faithful to the spirit of

its ancestors who were the first in Europe to adopt freedom of conscience as a watch-word and who held out to the very last when fighting for a good cause against an enemy whose numerical strength was far greater than theirs.'



## *Chapter Two*

### TRUTH CONQUERS

THE PRECEPT THAT TRUTH CONQUERS CANNOT BE repeated often enough, especially as we live in a time when truth is being suppressed. After the Munich Agreement it was clear to all of us that the second Republic had been deprived of stability. It had no fixed frontiers, only lines of delimitation. The question of guarantees had been left open by the Munich Powers, and this was where the greatest injustice lay. The Czechs had had to make a terrible sacrifice for the preservation of peace, and it was to be expected that the principle recognised at Munich would be maintained.

It was decided at Munich to divide up the different national groups and this was supposed to mean that the Czechs, Slovaks and Carpatho-Russians would have opportunities for peaceful development on a national basis. Nevertheless the Prague Government was compelled to retain three German high schools in Prague and Brno for Sudeten-German pupils who, under the Agreement, were surely foreigners, and to permit them to be educated in the Nazi spirit. Further, the Germans in the territories left to the Czechs were forbidden by Hitler's representative, the Deputy Kundt, to opt for Germany and return there to find work. Kundt indeed had quite openly declared that such option was not necessary, since in March they would already be seeing Brownshirts marching through the streets of Prague and Brno, and the National Socialists greeted each other with the cry: "Heil March!" The Czech population was, of course,

given no exact information, as the Czech newspapers were subjected to pressure by the Government and were not permitted to give true reports of the conflict between Czechs and Slovaks, but we were able to discover what what was going on from the German newspapers which were allowed to circulate.

The Government wanted in no circumstance to cause uneasiness among the people, and for this reason had forbidden the newspapers to print disturbing news. If the Czech population had been allowed to have a clear view of what was happening, things might have turned out differently.

March 15 had been announced as the day of great events, and we had all awaited it anxiously. Two days before, I was in the Press Department of the Foreign Office with Dr Frantisek Kubka and we exchanged views. I took up an optimistic attitude, but Kubka was very despondent. On the so-called Heroes' Memorial Day (March 12th), had occurred the Slovak conflict and a German had informed a Social Democrat that this was a trap set by Berlin for the Czechs ; that the German army was waiting at the frontier to enter the country, and that it was expected in Germany that in the next few days Slovakia would be declared independent and German control established over Bohemia and Moravia. At the very time that Hacha arrived in Berlin to save what he could, the German army was already marching into Moravska-Ostrava. On March 15th Hitler was already in the Hradshin, for his preparations had been made earlier. It had also not been forgotten to delay Emil Hacha in

Berlin, so that he could be received in the evening by Hitler on the Hradshin. Hitler, who hitherto had triumphantly paraded in all his newly conquered cities, had not dared to appear in public despite all the safety measures taken by the Gestapo and the S.S., and by the Czech police in conjunction with the Reichswehr.

Soon Hacha was able to announce that the only legal basis of the Protectorate was the Führer's decree of March 16th. By this he admitted that he had been compelled to agree to the treaty of the previous day in Berlin, and that the creation of the Protectorate had been accomplished by force. This circumstance is very important, since in reply to the attacks of the foreign Press and of the Czechs, Hacha had refrained from speaking of blackmail and had declared that he had gone to Berlin voluntarily. Through these statements, which were confirmed by official quarters, Hacha and the whole Czech people were placed in a very bad light. I had frequent opportunities of observing Hacha and of conversing with his colleagues and I know that while he was far from being such a profound politician or personality as Benes and was of much smaller stature, he was a man of extensive legal and literary knowledge, and just and honourable. As long as the Slovak conflict had been an internal matter, he had managed things excellently. He had been able to secure the adherence of General Gayda, at the same time preventing him from interfering in government business ; an old and ailing man, he had not shrunk from undertaking the journey to Canossa, and had borne himself honourably.

In fact he owed his election to the desire of the Czechs to have in office a man who was above politics. There was, however, no unanimity as to the choice of the third President of the Republic. In a few feverish weeks the leading men and supporters of the previous regime were gradually displaced. Gradually the Republic was losing its fundamental *Weltanschauung* and also its political influence. At first it was rumoured that Dr Jaroslav Preiss, the managing director of the Zivnostenska Bank and an eminent captain of industry, was to be elected. Then Jan Bata, head of the shoe concern, and one of the largest employers of the Republic, seemed the likely candidate. Then it was said that Beran would like to be elected President. But all these rumours, which had much truth in them, were finally silenced by the election of Hacha.

One may think what one will of Hacha's historical role, or of the horrible humiliation he suffered in Berlin, but one day history will recognise that Hacha undoubtedly tried to do his best for the Czech people.

The aeroplanes that zoomed over the roofs of Prague in the first days of the occupation were merely intended to demonstrate to the people that all hopes of Czech independence were gone forever. The same purpose was intended by the endless columns of tanks that rolled slowly and laboriously along the snow-covered streets of Prague, like crocodiles in the sand. Even the wording of the declaration of the Protectorate on March 16th, 1939, gave a clear idea of the nature of the new state. For the time being the Czech officials continued to function, but

under German supervision, and the only independent body was the Gestapo. Conditions were chaotic, since the German officials interfered with everything. They had to be restrained by a decree issued by von Blaskowitz.

The Protector, von Neurath, arrived on April 5th. His entry was so 'ceremonial' that, apart from the military and the Czech officials, only the Gestapo agents, the police and the small German colony turned out to meet him. The day of his arrival was declared a holiday; the Czechs spent it at home.

Up till March 15th, the Czechs had been anxious not to displease Berlin and had therefore dismissed all Jewish officials in the civil and diplomatic service. These were not numerous, but were of outstanding ability, as for instance Ministerial-Councillor Hoffman, who had been Press Chief and attaché for 19 years at the Embassy in Berlin, and who had translated the works of Masaryk and Benes. Internal political conditions had undergone a violent change. The political parties had dissolved and had urged their members to join the Narodni Sourucentvi, the National Labour Union, which was under the leadership of the agrarian and reactionary politicians. But the people did not agree with all the points in its programme, for it had much in common with the N.S.D.A.P. (National-Socialist German Workers' Party). The trade unions also proposed to merge together and so preserve their interests, although the workers were urged not to leave the existing unions, which were in liquidation.

The German national group had suddenly to transform itself, for it was not possible for a German to exist in

the Greater German 'living-space' without open adherence to National Socialism. If he wanted to amount to anything in business or in the state, he had to profess National Socialist ideas. Emil Franzel, who was director of the German educational institute, 'Urania,' which had served to help German-Czechoslovakian relations, became leader of the National Socialist cultural movement in Prague. He is not the only renegade. The formerly liberal daily paper, *Prager Tagblatt*, which belonged to Count Nostitz, had been largely read by Jews and had many Jews on its staff and had come to be regarded, after the *Neue Freie Presse* of Vienna, as the best central-European newspaper, was National Socialised and subsequently declined. Within a few months the editor-in-chief and his wife had committed suicide and, after the invasion, the paper was 'gleichgeschaltet' and then its publication was suspended. The Gestapo naturally arrested most of the staff. The Aryan Germans on the staff had denounced their Jewish colleagues, with whom they had been on a familiar footing for many years, and had taken over the newspaper under the title of *Der Neue Tag*. I do not claim that friendly feeling in Prague editorial offices was ever very strong, nor have I ever been of the opinion that the Prague press (with the exception of the leading daily paper, *Lidové Noviny*) ever really fulfilled its mission, but many of the worst and most treacherous denunciations came from these Augean stables.

Was the 'National State' of the Czechs', which had afterwards been called a 'State of Nationalities', really

so bad? I should like to quote here the words of Dr Joseph M. Mühlig, a Sudeten-German industrialist. Speaking of the advantages of the 'State of Nationalities', he said :

'The inhabitants of a state in which several nations live are preserved from certain prejudices. They get to know the individuality of the other nations in their daily intercourse and have the possibility of learning from them and of acquiring their virtues and discarding their own faults. Further, through this living together, they have excellent opportunities of learning languages. States where these conditions exist are more easily able to make contact with other countries. Conditions of this sort are favourable to economic development and facilitate intimate commercial relationships with foreign countries.'

After the September crisis, Mühlig, like all Germans, changed his opinion ; but this does not change the facts of the statement quoted. It is interesting to record also the opinion of a Czech, namely Jan Bata, who rose from being a shoemaker to become one of the greatest manufacturers in Europe. Of Czechoslovakia he said :

'Our Republic, from the economic point of view, has an excellent position. It can support many more people than it is doing to-day. For this, however, we need real entrepreneurs and an efficient national economy. We have only to exploit our mineral wealth, harness our water power, become a coastal-state with the help of canals, intensify agriculture and forestry,

and the development of industry and trade will follow automatically.'

Many more opinions of this kind could be quoted. They should disprove the lying propaganda which the Germans put about. The former Foreign Minister, Dr Kamil Krofta, who has to-day retired to the country to continue his studies in the history of music, denounced the attempts which were being made to convince the world that Czechoslovakia was preparing to attack its neighbours and that she was nothing less than the spring-board for the Bolshevik army. As proof of the falsity of this he quoted the words of Benes: 'Czechoslovakia is a strong, indestructible beacon-tower of Democracy and of peaceful, progressive development towards an increasingly larger degree of social, economic and national justice in Central Europe; she is a country which, in the present unquiet times, will unyieldingly maintain a middle path of development between the extreme Right and the extreme Left. This is her great strength and to-day her just pride; this gives her all the possibilities and means of healthily and successfully overcoming the present international crisis, without revolution within or conflict abroad.'

And what of the ordinary Czech? He has always been underestimated. Yet he has done much for the promotion of culture. Dr Benes is the typical representative of 'the little Czech man.' It is therefore of importance to note his personal credo. In a résumé of his principles for young Czechs, he says:



I. Life is and will always be a struggle; the first principle of life is to struggle honourably; understand, never despair, have a healthy optimism.

II. Be orderly. In a period of science and precision machines, only an exact worker can be successful.

III. To the intellectual worker: become a specialist in some particular branch of your subject, and so protect yourself from superficiality.

IV. Gradually transform your work into an achievement and therefore into a joy; therein lies the key to happiness in the world.

V. Do your work with consciousness of responsibility; undertake responsibility honourably and frankly.

VI. Develop yourself into a harmoniously balanced being, a synthesis of head and heart.

VII. For us Czechoslovaks, especially, this means rising out of our Slav provincialism, becoming Europeans and really being what the French call 'citoyens du monde.'

This is and always has been my personal credo, and according to it I have always striven to do my work—only thus do I find satisfaction in it. Success, final success, can only come where honour, uprightness and truthfulness prevail. But this does not mean that truth conquers of itself. The motto 'Truth Conquers' means that it is incumbent upon us to work for truth, to help it, and to fight for it unceasingly.

Czechoslovak policy was always the target of those countries which had denounced the Democratic system. In his capacity as Foreign Minister, Dr Benes often had

the opportunity of explaining the aims of Czechoslovak foreign policy to the Foreign Affairs Committee and also to the world. It was not easy to fight against the powers of darkness, and he had no light task, even internally. Benes, however, had rightly recognised the Press as an instrument of policy and was glad to employ it, perhaps because he had always felt himself to be a journalist. Therefore, much in the same way as Masaryk, he was always ready to discuss present-day problems and was open to suggestions. Benes summed up Czech policy as follows :

‘ The *continuity* of Czechoslovak policy was one of its main principles ; the deeper causes of this continuity in Czechoslovak policy lay in the circumstance that the Czechs were Democrats by nature ; they had no aristocratic traditions ; in origin they were all peasants, artisans or labourers. Democracy had failed in some countries because it had formed political blocs, which stood in extreme opposition to each other and had fought each other. The Czechs had come to the conclusion that the best remedy for these disadvantages of Democracy was political stability and that a state like theirs, which had to create everything alone—army, administration of finance etc.—had the duty of protecting the future and of preserving itself from being weakened by the struggle of Parties. For that reason they had pursued a policy of national unity and had a coalition government. To quarrel among themselves was a luxury they had to forego. The nation had a healthy instinct, and common sense had always been predominant. Further, even the autonomist Parties

desired political unity. Communism prospered only among those elements of the people who displayed a lack of political education. Their efforts in this connection were devoted to educating the people and raising their intellectual standard. Thanks to these efforts, Carpatho-Russia possessed over 500 new schools, whereas in the year following the War, when Czechoslovakia acquired that country, not one single school existed there.'

The Czechoslovak educational system deserved unstinted praise, for the achievements attained were beyond all expectation. In the twenty years of the Republic's existence the Germans, it is true, had learnt more technically (for purely economic reasons, of course), whilst the new Czech generation was not very conversant with the German language. But people worked in the Republic as never before, hard and quickly. Labour was the symbol of the Czech people. Already in 1898, Masaryk had spoken of labour in his speeches, at a time when the labouring masses believed that their labour was being exploited. Masaryk had laboured so much in his life-time that, like Benes, he had no time to be tired.

In one of our conversations, Benes said to me: 'I know you are an industrious person and I esteem you for it, for I am also industrious.' These words were accompanied by a warm smile. Previous to that, when I visited President Masaryk at Castle Topolcany in Slovakia, where he was spending a summer holiday, the latter said to me:

'You have written much about our Republic, and we are very grateful to you. You have a rich field of work.

True, science is also a very wide field, but a journalist can do more with an article than can be done with a strictly scientific disquisition.'

On another occasion Benes said: 'I understand you completely. It (i.e. the Republic) should be very interesting and comprehensive material for a writer, yet there are political motives which play an important part and merely handicap the writer. The publicist has, of course, quite a different viewpoint.' That is true, but still as a publicist I based my knowledge and work upon the fundamental features of the Czechoslovak Republic, whose heraldic motto, 'Truth Conquers,' expresses its political concept. This motto was adopted by Masaryk, who, in contrast to most politicians and diplomatists, always strictly avoided employing lies or the slightest untruths. He was never afraid to admit his ignorance of anything, although in that way he unconsciously revealed that he knew much about many things. He was the embodiment of truth and the love for truth, and he worked to the last for his state, his people and for the world.

Already in his speeches of 1898, Professor Masaryk, as he was then, said the following about the ethical and metaphysical significance of labour:

'Only through labour do we become men, independent characters. A man who does not labour is not independent. Nor is a people that does not. Without labouring, we never have sufficient confidence in ourselves. Only through labour do we realise our strength.'

Labour is self-knowledge. Self-knowledge means labour. Whoever does not labour is a superstitious person, a beggar, a vagabond, who waits for a miracle ; by the miracle he wants to live. And since one cannot live without labouring, there is nothing left but to enslave others. Therefore we rid ourselves by labour of our innate spirit of violence. Love for our neighbour is labour. Love is labour. Therefore we think that where ethics, prayer or education fail, labour will help. Thus labour becomes a remedy, not only in prisons, for man can everywhere be improved by labour. Through labour character is formed, and indeed not only the character of the individual, but also of types and classes. The sociologists make a distinction between the military and the industrial type ; Maurice speaks also of the knightly class and the merchant class. There is no doubt that every such class, so far as it is exclusively based on one mode of labour, is one-sided and imperfect.

‘ A few words on the metaphysical significance of labour. Not only man, but the whole of society, nay the whole of nature, is continually at work. The modern theory of progress and development implies a theory of labour, in the sense that every step takes place through labour, unconscious labour. Nature and society are a single, gigantic workshop. But not a completely mechanical slave-workshop. In so far as labour for us men is a means to an end, we are concerned with this end which the nation and the whole of mankind have in view. And through labour it attains this end, the ideal. The understanding of labour, the proper understanding of that which is

labour, should be a universal philosophy of labour. I would call it *Synergism*, viz., that through his share of labour everyone of us can make a valid contribution to the development of the whole, or can hinder this development or even bring it to a stop. Man is by nature a person labouring to shape the world.'

### *Chapter Three*

#### THE PARTY-SYSTEM AND ITS RESULTS

THE CZECHOSLOVAK REPUBLIC HAD, IN PROPORTION TO its population, more political Parties than most countries. They fought each other, politically and personally, with vigour. The existence of these Parties was evidence of the absolute freedom of thought and development. They had their Press, subsidised by Party funds, and newspapers were therefore very cheap, as they were not based on commercial principles nor dependent upon their circulation. This had its disadvantages. The influence of outstanding men, from a cultural standpoint, was valued purely from the view of Party. It was sufficient, for example, to work in the interests of the Republic and therefore to be close to government circles, in order to suffer as I have myself suffered in the attacks that the opposition made upon Dr Benes and his friends.

Following the September crisis the political Parties in Czechoslovakia underwent a great change, but their history up to September of 1938 was as follows:

The first revolutionary national assembly met on November 14th, 1918, and consisted of six Czech Parties with 254 members, and a club of the Slovak Parties. The number of members increased later to 270 and the Parliament of the revolution set about the task of working out the principles of the Democratic constitution of the state. On April 18th, 1920, a general election was held in which twenty-two Parties took part—eleven Czechoslovak, six German, two Hungarian, two Hungarian-German and one Jewish. The Czechoslovaks obtained

199 seats, the Germans 72, the Hungarians one, and the German-Hungarians nine. As far as political opinion was concerned, 50.16 per cent of the votes were Socialist and 48.84 per cent anti-Socialist.

Of these Parties, the largest was the *Republican Party of Farmers and Small Peasants* (i.e. Agrarian Party). Its beginnings go back to 1896. In 1911 it was already sending five deputies to the Austrian *Reichsrat*. When the Great War broke out in 1914 it was, under the leadership of Antonin Svehlas, one of the strongest Czech political Parties, with thirty-seven members in the *Reichsrat* and forty-five in the *Landtag*. In April 1919 the Party took its present name and drew up its present programme which states, among other things: 'Faithful to the Republic, we shall do everything to make her the mother of all citizens, without distinction of nation, religion or occupation. Her principles shall never be based on force, but on justice, truth, Democracy and parliamentary government.' Then follow the particular demands of the peasants and farmers, especially land-reform, which is aimed at the large estates which are to be given back to the peasants. 'The land and the fight for the land,' runs the revised programme of 1922, 'is the axis of the history of our people, of the Czechs and Slovaks.' Therefore distribution of the land and Democratic agrarianism.

In the first parliamentary elections of 1920 the Party obtained 845,663 votes, with forty seats in the Chamber and nineteen seats in the Senate. 181,000 of the votes were given to the *Slovak Agrarian Party*. The Party



leaders included Prasek, Donat, Dr Hodza, Srobar. In the elections of 1920, the number of votes it polled rose to 970,498, with forty-six seats in the Chamber and twenty-two in the Senate. It became thus, and in general remained, the strongest Czech Party. One of the members of the Party, Malypetr, became Chairman of the Chamber of Deputies, and another, Hodza, Premier. The introduction of the much disputed land-reform was its work, and it has also done a great deal in other ways for the Czechoslovak peasants and for its Party members.

The next largest Party in the State was the *Sudeten German Party*. This arose from the former National Socialist Labour Party (Jung-Krebs) and the *German National Party* (Kalina), which were both dissolved in 1932. It owed its growth to the creation of the Third Reich under Hitler, whose anti-Semitic, Greater-Germany programme appealed to the mentality of the Germans in Czechoslovakia, since they felt themselves, not quite without reason, to be hindered and threatened in their national and social development. They achieved such a victory in the Parliamentary elections of May 19th, 1935 (1,249,530 votes; forty-four seats in the Chamber; twenty-three seats in the Senate) that even the strong-nerved Czechs became jittery. The Sudeten leader, Konrad Henlein, who had not himself stood as candidate, demanded that the Sudeten-Germans should be given the Premiership and four Ministerial portfolios. But he was ignored as not being a Member of Parliament. The S.D.P. fought peacefully in Parliament, and with seeming loyalty to the Republic, for complete German autonomy. When Hitler

occupied and annexed Austria, the party openly acknowledged Hitler's National Socialism at Karlsbad in April 1938, and in its well-known eight points increased its demands for complete autonomy and restoration of the position of 1918. It was this movement that developed into irredentism, resulting first not in mere autonomy, but in the surrender of the Sudetenland to Germany, and finally, in the destruction of the Czech Republic.

The third Party of importance, the *Czechoslovak Social Democratic Labour Party*, first formulated its programme in 1878. At the congresses in Prague in 1920 and 1927 the programme was revised and adapted to the prevailing political, economic and cultural conditions of the Republic. Fundamentally it was Marxist: transformation of Capitalism into Socialist collectivism, with abolition of private ownership, acknowledgement of international class-war, and fraternity of nations for bread, peace and freedom. Within the framework of its programme the Party demanded in the political sphere: increase of self-government, fundamental reforms in the administration of justice, freedom of the press, general disarmament, support of the Labour International, etc.

In the first elections of 1920 the Party obtained the largest number of votes (1,590,620) with seventy-four seats in the Chamber of Deputies and forty-one in the Senate. The Social Democrat Tomasek became President of the Chamber and Dr Soukup Vice-President of the Senate. In the Government it had, apart from the Premiership (held by Tusar), five portfolios. But in October 1920, the Party split into the moderates and the Radical

Socialists. In the elections of 1925 the Social Democrats obtained 630,894 votes, with twenty-nine seats in the Chamber and fourteen in the Senate. The Party formed part of the Coalition Government right from the beginning. It contained the shrewdest politicians, and despite all storms and struggles, was firmly rooted in the people. In 1928 there was closer collaboration between the Czech and German Social Democratic Parties, but no fusion, since the national idea on both sides remained stronger than the international.

The Czechoslovak *National Socialist Party* was formed during a reaction against the Social Democrats in 1896. It was a radically national party of the lower-middle class and of the workers. In its programme of 1918 it stressed its Socialist features, whilst rejecting Marxist doctrines. In 1920 it secured twenty-four seats, twenty-eight in 1925 and thirty-two in 1929. In May 1935 it had twenty-eight seats in the Chamber of Deputies and fourteen in the Senate. Its most prominent member was Benes.

The *Communist Party* has already been fairly important, but has suffered ups and downs. It was not a purely Czech Party, for it counted amongst its adherents the German, Hungarian, Polish and Ukrainian Communists. At the 1925 elections it was the second largest Party in the State, but obtained only thirty seats in the Chamber in 1929 and 1935.

The various other Czech Parties require only brief mention. The Czechoslovak *Populist Party* wanted the application of Christian principles to the whole of public life, and defence of Catholic interests ; it had twenty-five

seats in the Chamber in 1929, and twenty-two in 1935. The Czechoslovak *Small Traders' Party* aimed at the protection of artisans and small shopkeepers against Socialism, big industry and state-subsidized industries; it had twelve seats in the Chamber in 1929, and seventeen in 1935. The *Fascist National Association*, whose leader was Rudolf Gayda, had no seats in 1929 and six in 1935.

The *German Social Democratic Labour Party* won admiration for its heroic attitude in the last months of the Republic. Its programme was similar to that of the Czechoslovak Social Democratic party, but it favoured autonomy for the national minorities. In 1929 it obtained twenty-one seats, but nearly became engulfed in the rising tide of Hitlerism from Germany; it obtained only eleven seats in 1935. Its leader was Wenzel Jaksch, who exhorted his followers to support the Czechoslovak state during its death agony.

The *Slovak Populist Party* first made its appearance in the political arena of the Republic at the assembly at Sillein on December 18th, 1918, when Andrej Hlinka was elected chairman. Almost from the first it demanded autonomy, Catholic schools, an exclusively Slovak army and language equality. In 1925 it obtained twenty-three seats in the Chamber and twelve in the Senate. It had Vice-Presidents in both Chambers in 1925, and on January 15th, 1927, was given two portfolios in the Government. But even as part of the Coalition Government it did not surrender its demands for autonomy. It was not representative of Slovakia as a whole but only a

minority of the Slovaks (489,639 as against 661,288) voted for the exclusively Czechoslovak parties.

Finally there were two *Magyar Parties*, intensely nationalist, which had nine seats in the Chamber in 1929 and the same number in 1935.

This system of Parties was overthrown after the September crisis. A few months later the Government Parties formed a 'Union Party', which they had so long desired. This weakened the active, bourgeois block. The Social Democrats, who had been badly disappointed by the Second International during the crisis, separated themselves from it for reasons of internal policy, and thereby made the first concession to Hitler—with dire effects. Marxism was to be destroyed. Attempts were made to persuade the Communists, a loyal but still 'Marxist-Bolshevist' Party, to go into voluntary dissolution. This they refused to do; they did not want to suppress the truth, and they were finally prohibited. Later the Czech Government began a campaign against the Communists and arrested several members of the Party. The Communists were in no way responsible for the collapse; they had always been very loyal, although they desired close collaboration with Russia, whose importance and assistance were also acknowledged by the other Parties. When the defence loan was put to the vote, both the Communists and the Social Democrats (who had previously held Pacifist and anti-militarist principles) voted for increased armaments. Masaryk once said that he was for peace and against war, but that he loved the army. Benes, the great Pacifist, later contributed most to the

development of the Czechoslovak Army. He had acknowledged its importance and during his Presidency had paid special attention to its growth.

But whatever the merits or demerits of the various Parties, after the September crisis everything was changed. The dissolved Parties lost their representation in both Houses. Even the Ministers who had voted in the Cabinet for the dissolution were deprived of their seats. The attempts to form a single Party, however, failed. The Agrarians, who had advocated co-operation with Germany, made far-reaching concessions to her and after Hitler's entry into Prague even included close collaboration with the N.S.D.A.P. into its programme. All the endeavours of President Hacha to organise political and economic life in one single political body came to nought. The Czechs henceforth had become one great political camp, which had no leadership. The political groups were now all unified but the nation was not unified with its leaders. The nation refused to recognise the authority of the man who had joined with Germany; it knew that the existence of this Union Party was more apparent than real, but the unified political will and the urge to form a great united front remained. However, such a front would drive the Germans from the country and let loose war against Germany. Political activity, therefore, has been transferred to various organisations, most of which masquerade as cultural institutions. Masonic Lodges and other charitable and cultural institutions had already been dissolved in the second Republic, and so prevented from indulging in further activity. The abolition of the rights

of free assembly and free speech, the introduction of a strict censorship, and other measures taken by the Gestapo and the SS., had made any understanding with the Czechs impossible.

The great National Assembly, which had been intended as the backbone for Dr Hacha, failed, as did also the great Economic Council under the leadership of Professor Hodac, at whose disposal the leading representatives of industry and finance had placed themselves. This Economic Council had omitted to observe the most important conditions. It had included in its programme the solution of the Jewish question, as a result of the nationalisation of industrial concerns. The Czechoslovak Government, however, lacked the necessary capital to carry out this nationalisation. The Beran government ordered the Ministerial Council to deal with this matter without delay. In the middle of January, 1939, I promised the Government to try to raise a foreign loan. An Anglo-American group had offered to guarantee a temporary credit of two million pounds, if it was given control of the industrial plants as security. Prime Minister Beran, who had learnt that the British Government was about to send a trade delegation to Rumania, instructed his envoy Krno by telephone to 'invite the English delegation to Prague.' Yet (through Prof. Hodac and his nephew) I succeeded in convincing the Prime Minister that the British trade delegation would not come to Czechoslovakia until business confidence had been re-established. The anti-Semitic announcements of the Government Press and the suggested Jewish law were not quite the sort of

thing to create greater confidence in the City or in Downing Street, for it was no longer a secret that the Government represented merely a transition stage. As a result of the conflict with Slovakia the Government had resigned, only remaining until it formally surrendered to the German military authorities. To Beran had fallen the historic role of greeting the new Reichsprotector von Neurath in the Prague Burg in Czech—for Beran is not too well acquainted with the German language.

In his capacity as general secretary of the Agrarian Party, which for several years had supplied the Prime Minister, Beran was one of the most powerful men in internal politics. He was regarded as being extremely ambitious, a shrewd man and an excellent organiser. Later he was appointed Vice-President of the Agrarian Party, since the Presidency was an honorary post and was dedicated to Svehla, a very shrewd peasant and possessed of great intelligence.

Beran's appointment as Minister was long postponed and with his entry into the Government began a very sad chapter in the history of Czechoslovak politics.

In 1933 Beran was touring Carpatho-Russia on a political campaign. Through the agency of deputy Zajic, I was introduced to him at a Party conference in the town of Berehovo, and we travelled together to Prague. He was accompanied by his nephew Machnik, later Minister of Defence, who was the target of Sudeten-German attacks when they presented their petition at Geneva. Beran wanted to discuss economic and agrarian problems in the Danube basin, and to inform me particularly why



the Agrarians placed obstacles of an economic nature in the way of a Czechoslovak-Hungarian understanding. At that time I was not very familiar with the Czech language and Machnik acted as an interpreter. Beran told me of his son who was studying languages, and then he drew my attention to the pretty women standing on the platform. He took off his boots (they were the high sort that were fashionable during the Monarchy) and his jacket, and undid his collar, without being in the least disturbed by the presence of the 'representative of public opinion.'

From that time onwards I had frequent opportunity of meeting Beran and hearing his views. Whilst the late V. Najman, formerly Minister for Railways and then for Trade, had been an instrument of the Small-Traders' Party, which he had founded, and at the same time an excellent Party politician, Beran was merely the typical secretary of a powerful political Party and was possessed of no initiative. Nor did he enjoy much popularity, although as Minister-Elect he had mobilised the films and the Press to present his views. When he appeared in the news-films, the audience merely laughed. He lacked all the attributes of a great statesman and only served to trip up his rival, Dr Milan Hodza, the eminent Slovak statesman who had frequently filled the Premiership. Yet Beran achieved decisive power in Party politics and later controlled political life. When President Benes resigned his high office, Beran was the first to cast stones at him.

The Fascist publicist and former Minister for Railways, Georg Stribny (who kept the Central-European Press

busy with his own little affairs) was also for many years one of the leading opponents of Benes and of the whole 'Burg policy.' In 1932 Stribrny alleged in his newspaper that I had received large subsidies for my book on Benes, and Benes and my humble self were subjected to coarse attacks. I was of course deeply offended by the publication of this libel and made no attempt to conceal my indignation from Benes. I saw from his face that the incident also embarrassed him, but after carefully reading the article, he said: 'Stribrny is of no account in Czechoslovak politics. Remember the proverb: "When the caravan moves the dog barks." *We* still have power in our hands, and will continue to have it for a long time. I cannot, of course, prevent such attacks in the Press, even if they do overstep the bounds of decent journalist practice. But console yourself. You are in good company, because I am included in the attack.' When I attempted to say something, he interrupted me and continued, regarding me seriously: 'Or perhaps you don't think you are in good company?' I had to admit with a smile: 'The company is very good. But why should we permit propaganda hostile to Czechoslovakia, which is not based on truth?' Benes compressed his lips and said: 'This article claims that you received from me subsidies amounting to millions of kronen for your books. You know you have not received them, and I know that I could not have given them to you. The whole thing is a lie. So what is upsetting you?' When I saw the sincere indignation of Benes, I had to say with a smile: 'The fact that it isn't true is what upsets me most.' Benes

laughed in his characteristic manner although, to be sure, I rarely saw him laugh during his difficult tenure of office. His political opponents hardly gave cause for merriment, for they vented their spleen on him to the full, and Masaryk often had to exercise his veto on behalf of his favourite pupil and successor.

The Czechoslovak Party-politicians were not stupid, but they had a narrow outlook. Karel Capek, the great Czech dramatist and a friend of Masaryk, once said to me: 'We, the intellectual élite, will always understand one another. . . . Only the politicians cause nations to quarrel.'

In the Czechoslovak Republic there had been severe Party battles. The German and Hungarian questions, as well as the other minority problems, had always given rise to bitter feeling. The heritage that fell to Benes was therefore by no means a light one, and I can assure the whole world, on oath, that Benes put his whole force and mind to securing the welfare of his people during his long tenure of office. It was not easy to force concessions from him in matters of policy; he insisted vigorously on his point of view; he had an extreme love of truth and candour. Much has been written about Benes, but his true nature has never been properly grasped. Like many eminent men he was unfortunate in his choice of colleagues. When once I brought a complaint against Jan Hajek, his Chief of the Press Department of the Foreign Ministry, he listened to me attentively and ordered an inquiry. A few days later he had me summoned in order to inform me of the result. He said: 'I know

that many people are opposed to him, but believe me, he is better than his reputation, for he does his best. He is industrious and reliable; somewhat hard, it is true, but this would not hurt any of us. After all, we must be hard if we are to get on.' Benes defended all his colleagues from attack, especially Arne Laurin (alias Lustig), chief editor of the official *Prager Presse*, which was by no means one of the pleasantest political organs. Benes always took the side of the weak and the attacked, but he always let justice prevail. Thus did he incur the hatred of all those who were opposed to his *protégés*.

The political Parties had one thing in common: they all wanted to get into power. Of course they all meant well by the state, but above the state was the all-powerful Party. If one had an uncle in the Party, one could obtain promotion and without any particular ability play some important role in this machinery. Connections were of greater importance in the Republic than, say, in England. However, a good recommendation in politics was a rarity, for none of the political Parties enjoyed a good reputation during the elections or with its opponents. In this respect the Czech political Parties (the others played no decisive part) were very similar to the French, both as regards corruption and jobbery. It was Benes who appealed for an *ethical* standpoint in Party matters.

What took place in Parliament was always less interesting than what occurred in the club-rooms of the various Parties and it was from this source that I obtained my best information. Parliament was dull unless there were some unusually exciting debate on. The dispute

over the railway law, for instance, went on for days. The Minister defended his proposals, and the opposition voted against each one of them merely because it was the opposition. The debates did not always have any useful result. However, the Czechoslovak Chamber and Senate functioned excellently and Czech internal policy was by no means bad. The tragedy was in no way due to internal or foreign policy alone, but to quite unforeseen circumstances which came in such a flood that the Czechoslovak people, that young nation of 1918, could offer no effective resistance.

## *Chapter Four*

### THE PARLIAMENTARY SYSTEM IN CZECHOSLOVAKIA

IT IS ONLY POSSIBLE TO SPEAK OF A CZECHOSLOVAKIAN parliamentary system up to September, 1938, when the disruption of the Republic began. What followed afterwards, and continued until the German annexation, was only the shadow of Parliamentarianism, while to-day all the components of the former Czechoslovakia are under authoritarian government, just as in the dictator countries. (Incidentally, it has been said, with reference to the dictator countries, that a country without parliamentary government is like a beautiful woman without wit; but in the light of recent historical developments it would be more correct to say that it is like a man who is unconsciously digging his own grave.) We will therefore review the Czechoslovakian parliamentary system as a piece of history, in the past tense.

The Czechoslovak Constitution, drafted by the so-called Revolutionary National Assembly between November, 1918 and March, 1920, was modelled, in particular, on the American and French Constitutions, with Liberty and Equality for all the citizens of the Republic as its basic principle. It provided for two legislative bodies, a Lower and an Upper House (the Senate), and universal secret suffrage from the age of twenty-one. The Lower House was to consist of 300 members, all over thirty years of age, and the Senate of 150, all over forty-five years of age; the Lower House, as in other Democratic countries, being invested with greater powers in many respects

than the Senate. Ruthenia was to have an autonomous Constitution, but she never possessed one *de facto* during the existence of the Republic.

The first General Election took place in the spring of 1920, and on May 20th of that year the Czechoslovakian Parliament met for the first time, the Czech Social Democrat Tomasek being elected Speaker of the Lower, and the Czech Agrarian Horacek President of the Upper House. It was evident from the outset that the influence and power of any individual Deputy or Senator would be determined not so much by his personal qualities as by his Party allegiance and this, indeed, was consistent with the Czech national character.

Needless to say, although the Czechs were split up into so many different Parties, when it came to vital questions, as during the critical months of 1938, they formed a solid block, instantly sinking all Party conflicts and differences.

As regards the actual work of the Czechoslovakian Parliament, it may be said that it was complicated beyond measure on the inessential side, and simple and efficient in all essential respects. The complication arose from the fact that the debates were conducted in no fewer than five languages—Czech, Slovak, German, Hungarian, and Polish. While no member of the Government and no *rapporteur* was allowed to address either House in any language but Czech or Slovak, the Deputies were free to use their respective native tongues, and all the speeches had to be recorded in the Czechoslovakian equivalent of the English *Hansard* both in the original and in a

Czech translation. The terrific amount of clerical work involved was as nothing compared with the Tower of Babel character of the proceedings, despite all the formalities that could be devised to render them orderly and intelligible. Nevertheless, the Czechoslovakian Parliament was not merely a 'gasworks'; it was a place where all sections of the people could make their voices heard and where even the most extreme views could be freely expressed, and that, after all, is one of the essential principles of Democracy.

The legislative work proper was carried out by special committees, which functioned smoothly, efficiently, unaffected by the language difficulty, and undisturbed by violent outbursts and undignified scenes, such as were not infrequent in Parliament. This peacefulness was all the more necessary as, Czechoslovakia being a new State, there were some thousands of laws to be drafted. The Committees worked industriously, unremittingly, impelled by a high sense of duty, and were assisted by staffs whose zeal and untiring devotion was equal to theirs and, indeed, reflected the Czech national character.

As to the Czechoslovak parliamentarians, practically all the Czech and Slovak Deputies and Senators proved to be born politicians and speakers, and it was not only prominent debaters like Hodza, Hlinka, and Tiso, who, by their temperamental, impassioned orations, put the speed of the parliamentary shorthand writers to the severest tests.

In this connection it may be of interest to reproduce the impressions of Franz Steiner, parliamentary short-



hand writer for twenty years, concerning the conduct of Dr Benes as Deputy and Foreign Minister. I had many conversations on the subject with Steiner, who is to-day most probably in one of Hitler's concentration camps. According to him, the most attractive quality of Benes was that he was an excellent listener. He listened to the speeches of friends and foes alike, not as a duty and not as a matter of courtesy, but—at least apparently—with a genuine, concentrated interest that was in itself a compliment to the speaker. Although he was the busiest of Czech politicians, he would sometimes sit patiently for many hours, in the Chamber or in Committee, listening to more or less impassioned attacks upon himself and his foreign policy, always with an expression that reflected respect not only for the person of the speaker, but also for his arguments.

Another quality of Dr Benes's character, which sometimes surprised Steiner, was his frankness. Where another Minister would have sought refuge in the usual phrase about 'sealed lips', Benes spoke openly about all aspects of his foreign policy, and even in the most delicate situations never evaded a question on the plea of necessary secrecy. Another characteristic was the conciliatory spirit which he displayed both in victory and defeat. When he succeeded in routing an opponent, he prevented personal ill-feeling by his disarming courtesy, while if one of his projects was disapproved by Parliament he prevented complications by his Democratic submission to the will of the majority, though sometimes he was only 'biding his time'. That was the case

with the Soviet Pact, for which Benes was obliged to fight again and again before he was allowed to realise it. That the Pact ultimately proved to be worthless, was due, as all the world now knows, to circumstances that had nothing to do with the Pact itself. At the same time, Benes was never stubborn, and was always prepared to yield to well-founded arguments or to the pressure of events. As to the irrepressible optimism that was reflected in Benes's statements as Foreign Minister and President, Steiner thought that it was the optimism of a man who was convinced that despite crises and catastrophes, truth, reason and humanity must conquer in the end. That Benes was also an ideal colleague is proved by the statements of those who worked and struggled with him for the creation of Czechoslovakia. As T. G. Masaryk, son of President Masaryk, once wrote, 'Throughout the time of our exile there was not a single misunderstanding between us.'

I frequently discussed all these matters with Dr Ivan Dérer, Minister of Education and later Minister of Justice in the Czechoslovak Government, during our work on a book we wrote jointly. Dérer, a Slovak and a Social Democrat, kept the interests of his Party rigidly apart from the work of his high office, and his views and judgment were strictly objective. Curiously enough, it was through him that I had an experience which exemplifies one of the principal defects of the Czechoslovakian parliamentary system. I complained to him that the courts of justice were overwhelmed with work and that there were consequently too many cases of judicial

error. Dr Dérér ordered an immediate investigation and later referred me to Dr Lanyi, who subsequently became President of the Supreme Court of Appeal. Dr Lanyi promised to introduce radical measures to remedy the situation, but his promise remained a promise. This discrepancy between promise and performance in internal affairs was even greater in Czechoslovakia than in most other countries.

The season of promises was, of course, election time, when each Party made lavish promises not only to the electors but also to every other Party. That was the case in the dispute between the Agrarian Party, which wanted a corn and meat monopoly—that is to say, a 'managed economy'—and the Social Democrats, who opposed this, as it only led to an increase in the price of food.

At the same time, despite all the internal difficulties and despite all the broken promises, which were constantly kept before the public by a Democratic Press, the Czechoslovakian system of government was one that made for peace and prosperity, one to which external peace was indispensable and, as Dr Dérér wrote in the critical days of September, 1938:

'The Republic has been working for peace for twenty years. There has been no civil war, no unrest; we have solved our problems by normal means, although the national and social contrasts have been considerable. If the Republic were not subjected to external pressure, the peace of Europe would never be disturbed on account of Czechoslovakia.'

M Necas, Minister of Public Welfare, expressed the same thing in different words when he wrote that the difficulty presented by the Czech-German question lay not in the practical solution of administrative and cultural details, which could be adjusted with comparative ease, but in the clash of two diametrically opposed ideologies. In other words, it lay in the fact that anti-Democratic districts could not exist in a Democratic Republic, within the territory of which no citizen could be outlawed or deprived of his political and social rights merely because he refused to adhere to a certain political faith.

When these declarations by the Czechoslovak Ministers were made, Czechoslovakia was already the focus of momentous events—events that moved with lightning rapidity, even for a century in which history is being made almost on mass-production lines. In the past, the historian of a century only had a few dates to record : one or two wars, epidemics or other catastrophes. In the present century there has been an historic incident for almost every month of every year.

Indeed, a brief survey of the history of the five years preceding the 'September Crisis' will show that the whole trend of political development had been directly or indirectly, leading up to that catastrophe. In 1933 Mussolini said, 'This is going to be a fateful year', and he was justified by events. It was the year of Hitler's accession to power, the simultaneous destruction of the Weimar Republic and of all that Rathenau, Scheidemann, Erzberger and Stresemann had toiled to build up. The firing of the Reichstag and the mass arrests and atrocities

were only minor incidents in the great drama. But the threat to Czechoslovakia was already there. In 1934 Mussolini promised the Austrian Chancellor Dollfuss that Italy would defend the independence of Austria, by force of arms if necessary. In July of the same year the mighty little man was assassinated. A moment of grave danger to Europe, but the moment passed. Still in the same year, Hindenburg died and with him went whatever restraining influence he might have exercised. Hitler became the Führer of the Third Reich. The year 1934 also held a warning for Czechoslovakia. In 1935 Hitler declared that Germany had no territorial claims against France, whereupon the French Minister of War reduced the period of military service in France to eighteen months, whereupon, again, Germany introduced conscription. Italy started her Abyssinian campaign. 'Sanctions.' Grave danger of war once more. The German Army manoeuvres along the Czechoslovakian frontier only emphasised what all this would mean to Czechoslovakia. In 1936 Hitler turned the Treaty of Locarno into a 'scrap of paper', while Mussolini was bringing his Abyssinian campaign to a victorious conclusion. In July of the same year the Civil War in Spain flared up, and continued to the accompaniment of the farce of 'non-intervention.' Hitler and Mussolini began their rehearsal for the next war. The year 1937 saw the conclusion of the Anglo-Italian 'Gentleman's Agreement' and the Anglo-German Naval Agreement. The conflict in the Far East was too distant to worry Europe. Then, early in 1938, came the annexation of Austria by Hitler, the most direct threat to Czecho-

slovakia so far. A great silence fell upon Europe. Mussolini, his promise to Dollfuss forgotten, was silent; France, England and the Little Entente were silent. That was in March. Then—Henlein and the Sudeten German demand for autonomy. On May 21st Germany mobilizes and motorized columns thunder towards the Czechoslovakian frontier. England intervenes and averts war. Hitler makes a ferocious speech in Nuremberg. Disturbances, mainly engineered by the Germans themselves, in the Sudeten territory. There are many dead and wounded and the Czechoslovak Government imposes martial law. The demand is now for the 'return' of Sudetenland to the Reich. Mr Chamberlain, the British Prime Minister, flies to Berchtesgaden to negotiate with Hitler, flies back to London, and the Czechoslovak Government receives an Anglo-French note demanding that they should agree to the detachment of the Sudeten territory from the Republic. The Government issues a manifesto to the effect that they are obliged to yield to force. Mr Chamberlain again flies to Germany. Then—Czechoslovakia is dismembered. The Germans take their share, and so do the Hungarians and the Poles. Then Slovakia secedes. By March 15th, 1939, the fate of Czechoslovakia is definitely sealed. Not only Slovakia and Ruthenia are lost; Bohemia and Moravia are also lost—through annexation. Everything is lost; everything but the hope of resurrection.

The question poses itself: Was Czechoslovakian diplomacy or the Czechoslovakian Parliament really so inactive as would appear? So long as Benes was

Foreign Minister his periodical statements on foreign policy in the Lower House were always approved. They were masterpieces of construction and lucidity, and left no doubt as to the trend of Czechoslovak foreign policy. His successor, Prof. Dr Kamil Krofta, followed Benes's example in this respect. The trouble was that Krofta, a brilliant man and a great scholar, was even more optimistic than Benes himself. In 1935, after my return from a visit to Poland, Dr Krofta asked me what was my impression about the general attitude of Poland towards Czechoslovakia. Relations between the two countries were then rather strained, and my report included the following sentences: 'The great masses of the Polish people have a fraternal inclination towards Czechoslovakia and they would welcome closer political co-operation. Unfortunately, there are reasons of political prestige, and even personal reasons, that make this impossible. In view of my conversations with Polish army officers of high rank, I am of the opinion that as far as Poland is concerned the Teschen question is not yet settled and that the Army, in particular, has thoughts of territorial revision.'

Dr Krofta gave me a long, searching look, then he said that this conclusion was a hasty one and unfounded. 'We have no dispute with Poland in connection with Teschen; that question was settled between us long ago.' All my arguments were in vain; the Foreign Minister refused to be moved.

In addition to this super-optimism, there was the fact that diplomatic appointments were governed by

personal considerations. In Warsaw there was no Ambassador, Poland having recalled her own. The chargé d'affaires, Dr Jaromir Smutny, a zealous advocate of the national idea and, to-day an émigré in Paris, was a most capable diplomat and one of Benes's intimate friends, but he could not overcome the difficulties connected with his post, and he failed to win the confidence of the Polish Foreign Office and the sympathy of official Poland until the collapse of his country.

Further, the Czechoslovakian Secret Service did not function particularly well. The report of the German concentration of troops in May, 1938, came to the Czechoslovakian Government from the British Intelligence Service. True, the Ministry of Defence had a well organised military espionage system, but Prague seemed to be more interested in the private affairs of certain Ministers, politicians and publicists. Thus for instance the Press Department of the Czechoslovakian Foreign Office carried on its files detailed particulars concerning the relations of foreign journalists with the fair sex, but nothing about their relations with important politicians and political leaders. The Department was simply peopled with incompetents. It was its task to make friends for the Republic, but it frequently made enemies instead.

Parliament itself was too busy with internal politics, and left foreign affairs to tried leaders who, in turn, were so over-burdened with work that they were frequently obliged to rely on information from untrustworthy sources. Dr Benes, for instance, was during the last two years before his election to the Presidency obliged to



travel a great deal in connection with League business. Among other things, the question of territorial revision was delayed again and again, until, in the twentieth year of the Republic's life, it turned out that it was too late. And the Czech people are left puzzling over the events of 1938, which ought to have been the harvest time of twenty years of Democracy and Equality.

## *Chapter Five*

### THE SOVIET 'MENACE'

IN THEIR PROPAGANDA CAMPAIGN THE GERMANS USED to make much of the Soviet 'menace.' The struggle against Soviet Russia had already been encouraged in the Weimar republic by the Social Democrats who, if they had combined with the Third International, would have destroyed Fascism in Germany for all time. Instead they fought against it and dissolved the front-fighters' organisations and other such bodies at a critical moment. When the Social Democratic 'Reichsbanner' was dissolved the fate of Germany was sealed. The devil on the wall—Soviet Russia—was the common enemy, a fact, however, which did not prevent the Germans either at that time or the present from doing good business with Russians.

Czechoslovakia owed much of its independence to the former Russian government among whose members they had many friends and sympathisers. Masaryk had prepared his great military operations in Tsarist Russia, and love and gratitude to the Russians have become firmly rooted among the Czech people. The love for 'little mother Russia' was transferred to Bolshevik Russia, although the Czech Legions had been engaged in severe struggles with the Bolsheviks. Benes always showed a prejudice against Communism, and in this he followed the lead of Masaryk. But neither of these two statesmen ever underestimated the importance of Soviet Russia. Benes took the view that ideological differences (he belonged at that time to the Czech National Socialist Party, which must

not be confused with the German National Socialist Party) should not prevent the Czechs from having friendly relations with the neighbouring country. Within Czechoslovakia, Benes had indeed waged fierce battle against the Communists, but his shrewd statesmanship had convinced him of the importance and significance of Soviet Russia.

Upon my own return from Soviet Russia, I demanded the recognition of the Soviet Union in an article I had published in a very important political journal. Soon after this I met Dr Benes and in the course of conversation I asked him whether it was to be expected that the Little Entente would recognise Russia. He replied: 'We, too, are of the opinion that such recognition as you have advocated would be of importance for us. I agree completely with your statement that Czechoslovakian industry would benefit, but everything would depend on the financial problem of how credits might be assigned.' I pointed out the financial policy of the Reichsbank and the German Chamber of Commerce (the Reichsbank had given a credit of twenty million Reichsmarks to Russia) and began to explain the basis of this financial policy. Benes listened patiently and then said: 'I think that we could also come to some agreement on this question, but you must not forget that we cannot recognise the Soviet Union until the Great Powers have done so. Otherwise, although the step would be a wise one, we would arouse all the anti-Bolshevists against us.' I urged upon him that Soviet Russia ought to be accepted as a member of the League of Nations. Dr Benes gazed at me

earnestly and assured me that Soviet Russia was already negotiating to this end.

In the following month took place the conversations with Litvinov which led to harmonious relations between the two statesmen. While this was going on Dr Benes hinted to me that I should continue my campaign in the press for the recognition of Soviet Russia, although in my articles I had made no secret of my anti-Communist sentiments.

At a press-reception arranged by the Little Entente I questioned the Rumanian Foreign Minister Titulescu about the recognition of Russia, and he declared that his views were the same as those of his friend Dr. Benes. 'Benes has spoken for me,' he said with a smile, whereupon Dr Benes, also smiling, replied : ' And his Excellency has spoken for me.' I then inquired whether Rumania was really in favour of recognition, seeing that Soviet Russia had never actually surrendered its claims to Bessarabia and might one day attack it; further the Dobrudja question was not regarded as settled by Bulgaria. Titulescu curled his lips in his characteristic smile and said in his thin, incisive voice : ' Do you really think so ? I can assure you that, as far as we are concerned, the Dobrudja question has long ago been settled ; it is part of the heart of the Rumanian kingdom and we shall defend it with our blood. The same can be said for Bessarabia. I for my part do not believe that Soviet Russia has any hostile intentions. You must not confuse journalism with diplomacy.'

Two years later, at another press-reception, held on

the occasion of the Balkan Conference in Bukarest, Titulescu read a communiqué composed by the Foreign Ministers of Greece, Turkey and Rumania. It was just a vague general statement and I asked Titulescu whether he had anything more to add to it. He replied to me and to the other journalists: 'Now, if we told you everything, all diplomacy would go to the devil.' And as I glanced at my notes of the communiqué, he added: 'And don't forget to write that I said so.' It was often the practice of Titulescu, as of Clemenceau, to divert attention from the seriousness of a situation by a timely joke. Yet we knew that the anti-Russian Titulescu had taken up the course of recognition, although he later returned to his anti-Russian attitude. His services however in the cause of the recognition of Russia must not be underestimated. That the efforts of Russia and Rumania did not lead to a friendly understanding between the two countries is largely due to the Government of Octavian Goga, who did much to destroy Rumania's self-respect.

However this may be, there was much hostility against Soviet Russia. Despite their racial and religious affinity, the Yugoslavs were never able to muster much enthusiasm for the Russians. As for the Bulgarians, they had hung Communists in crowds in the Zanko affair of 1925. Throughout the Balkans, where Communism had easily spread, it was ruthlessly suppressed. Nor would Communism have won many supporters in Czechoslovakia if freedom of speech and the Press had not driven a part of the opposition into its ranks. By recognising Soviet Russia, Benes had taken the wind out of the sails of the

Communists. This did not prevent the Government from restricting Communist activity in its parliamentary form as much as possible. In Parliament the Communists called loudly for the blood of the Government, and especially reviled the Czech clericals and Fascists, but in vain. Karel Kramár, that legendary opponent of the Benes policy and of Soviet Russia, paid them back in their own coin.

Kramár, who was an invalid in the last years of his life, received me in his castle on the highest of the hills which surround Prague. His castle seemed to hurl defiance at the Hradsin. His wife was a Russian and had had a lot of property in Russia which the Communists had confiscated. This was one of the reasons why he was no friend of the Moscow régime. Further, as a Catholic, he spoke very bitterly of the persecution of the Church in Russia. In my interview with him Kramár indicated the heavy burden which might fall upon Czech economy as a result of the trade pact with Russia. He was supported in his views by the heavy industries and he aired his opinions in the *Narodní Listy*, the Party-organ of the National Democrats.

Despite the opposition to Bolshevism, the political commonsense of the Czechs and their traditional love of Russia prevailed. Benes visited Moscow, thus laying the foundation-stone of the future Russo-Czech pact.

German propaganda used the Pact, which had been made for the protection of a contented Democracy, to pretend to the world that Czechoslovakia was a nest of Marxists plans for world domination and the overthrow

of bourgeois civilisation. The German Press began a campaign of vilification which far exceeded the anti-British propaganda of the Great War. For years these anti-Marxist arguments were used and the lie was spread that Czechoslovakia had erected aerodromes in the east of the Republic for Soviet planes. At the request of the Foreign Minister, a group of foreign journalists and myself travelled to Uzhorod and Mukacevo in order that we might see for ourselves that the statement was false. Although the foreign journalists published a denial of the existence of these aerodromes the lie was still circulated. Then began the campaign of 'incidents' provoked by the Gestapo as an excuse for Hitler's invasion of Czechoslovakia; and immediately after the invasion Hitler had Communists, Social Democrats and other liberal-minded citizens arrested. Even the President of the Senate, Dr Frantisek Soukup, was arrested as he was returning from the funeral of one of his colleagues, in spite of the fact that some months previously, at Hitler's request, the Czechoslovak Minister of the Interior had conducted a severe campaign against the Communists. Concessions had been made to him by dissolving the Masonic Lodges and all liberal institutions. In the months immediately preceding the invasion, it seemed as if the second Republic was quickly becoming authoritarian. This was revealed by the tone of the Government Press and the measures of the Beran ministry. Although the Democratic Czechs resented this development they believed that they would have to make heavy sacrifices of this kind to preserve peace with Germany.

This severe internal strain resulted in a grave economic crisis which was also partly due to the loss of territory to her three neighbours. The Czechs had wanted to rebuild their economic system within the framework of the land that was left to them. The task was well-nigh impossible. An official of the Export Institute, which had been set up to promote foreign trade, declared to me : ' We have made a great mistake in attempting to seek an export market in countries across the sea when Germany is ready to take the majority of the things we produce.' All my objections that German economic policy was really directed against Czech competition made no impression. I quoted figures and evidence to prove my argument that the Sudetenland, which Germany had acquired in the September crisis, was a burden for her and must cause discontent in German industrial circles. This too made no impression. Nor was he impressed when I tried to explain that the new Czechoslovakia enjoyed the sympathy of the whole world, whilst Germany was being subjected everywhere to a boycott and could easily be robbed of her markets if Czechoslovakia remained true to her Democratic traditions.

After his entry into Prague, Hitler announced to the world through Goebbels and his Press Chief Dietrich, that in the enlarged Greater Germany the Czechs would have greater and more favourable possibilities of development. He wanted to spread abroad the impression that Czechoslovakia had been incapable of independent political and economic life.

There is now no more talk of Bolshevism in the



Protectorate, nor anything said about 'destroying the Marxist nests', for the German soldiers in contact with the Czechs see them clearly for what they are—an honest, peaceful people—and write home to say so. The Protectorate officials, especially the Reichswehr, seek to win the sympathy of the population. They are polite and friendly in intercourse with them so long as it is not of an official nature. The Czechs, however, have only to glance at the controlled Press to realise that an attempt is being made to fool them. No stone is left unturned to deprive them of faith in their former leaders. Attempts are made to besmirch Benes and those who worked with him in the eyes of his compatriots. All kinds of lying statements are made to try and prove that the leaders of the Democracy had embezzled large sums of money and that all hopes of aid from them are vain. The Germans see and feel that the Czechs regard the German domination as a purely temporary one, and that they have never given up hope of the restoration of the Republic. This the overweening German pride cannot tolerate.

The Germans have the feeling that they are sitting on a branch which is being sawn through. German propaganda is seriously embarrassed because it can no longer paint the devil on the wall since the people know that it is to be found in the very camp whence the warnings come. The former Prime Minister, Dr Milan Hodza, one of the leading statesmen in the Republic, once said to me when I was busy writing a book dealing with his political ideas: 'I am always being attacked by the

Germans because of my Danube policy in a manner which would completely upset a sensitive person. I am by no means against close collaboration with Germany in the economic sphere. Politically, however, there are great ideological differences which we can never surrender for purely economic reasons. We shall vigorously reject any attempt by the Reich to influence our internal policy or to control our relations with other countries. I myself am a great friend of German culture and delight in using the German language. But I cannot really be expected to swallow everything that is spoken in Germany.'

Hodza had conceived of the collaboration of the Danube States upon agrarian lines. He was always dreaming of an agrarian bloc which would be strictly controlled economically and financially. He was also, however, a great friend of England where he had many political friends, and was very unpopular in Berlin. He early recognised that the German problem was vital. He might have brought about its solution with his Agreement of 1932-37 if it had not been torpedoed by the political Parties and especially by his own Agrarian Party. He had conducted the negotiations with the Germans and had shown himself to be manly and honourable. He had also to give advice to Lord Runciman and he did everything in his power to save all that could be saved. The masses, however, dissatisfied with the turn the German question had taken and discontented also with the Agrarian Party, called for a military ruler in the person of General Sirovy.

Sirovy, the hero of Zborov, was an accomplished soldier who enjoyed the favour of Masaryk and who was popular with the people for his legendary activities with the Czech legion during the War in Russia. With his black eye-patch he resembled the hero Jan Zizka, leader of the Hussites in the 14th Century. But politically he was foolish and incapable and it was during his Government that disintegration set in. He displayed an unpardonable spirit of concession in the Slovakian and Carpatho-Russian question. This Zizka of 1938, on whom the hopes of the whole army hung, was, according to one statement, against fighting because in September, Czechoslovakia would have had to do so single-handed, but the army itself was ready to fight for the retention of the Sudeten German territories. His successor, Beran, merely completed the work of disintegration even if, as must be admitted, he was a better politician. Jan Malypeter, who had held the Premiership several times before, held office in between Sirovy and Beran, and he too was a by no means suitable man.

The failure to resist the Germans had dire results. By the Vienna award of November 2nd, 1938, von Ribbentrop and Count Ciano assigned to Hungary an area of 10,400 square kilometres containing a population of 1,100,000, consisting of Slovaks, Hungarians, Jews, and Carpatho-Russians. The frontier revisions in Bohemia and Moravia produced confusion, paralysing the resisting power of the Czechs and destroying their whole economic system. Horrible weeks of despair followed. In the nerve strain produced by the defeat,

the continuous danger of War, the German provocations, and the strict measures of the Government, the rabble amongst the Czechs obtained the upper hand and shouted down all appeals to be reasonable. A civil war threatened to break out. It was at this point, when an incapable Government was in office, that Hitler presented his ultimatum to Dr Hacha. Whilst the latter was attempting to postpone the 'mad plan', the German troops were already marching across the Czech frontier and the President had to sign the German terms. No, the devil is not in Russia . . .

## Chapter Six

### WHITHER AHASUERUS?

EVER SINCE ITS BIRTH, THE THIRD REICH HAS BEEN TRYING to 'solve' the Jewish question, but it has not yet succeeded. There were more than half a million Jews who felt themselves to be German, and who thought as Germans. They were just as German as Kant, Fichte and Lessing. Now German expansion has brought eight million Czechs into Germany—people who have never wanted to be Germans and will tenaciously resist any attempt to be Germanised, for they have a three-hundred-year-old tradition behind them.

To-day we live in a different tempo. Three hundred years may be packed into three years, or perhaps three months. In the twentieth century, we have seen medieval conditions prevail in Germany, called into being within thirty days of domination by Hitler. Bismarck once declared that he would not attack a *single* Jew, 'lest the whole Jewish community scream'. Hitler has babbled about a Jewish International and has tended to make Jewry into one. Yet it is not merely the Jewish community that sighs, but all those peoples who see in the spirit of the Bible the highest good of human freedom and brotherly love. The 'People of the Book' has found allies among all those who love the Book, especially the English.

I do not wish to examine the Jewish question here, but intend only briefly to discuss the fate of the Jews in Czechoslovakia. When I left Czechoslovakia, the condition of the Jews there was critical, but no one knew

the shape that things would finally take. I had been informed by subordinates of Minister Dr Havelka, the confidant of President Hacha, that the President had refused to sign even the milder draft of the Jewish law and had sent the Bill back to be revised by the committee which had already spent months on it.

I will summarise here some of the reports that have appeared in the English press, most of them supplied by the Jewish Telegraph Agency:

The Czechs have brought in a Jewish law. This the Protector of Bohemia and Moravia, Baron von Neurath, has refused to sign on the grounds that it is too mild. He wishes it to approximate more to the Nuremberg Code, with its clause of 'racial desecration'. In fact, he has rejected the draft three times, and has had heated words about it with General Elias, the Czech Premier. Anti-Semitism is not a popular movement in the Protectorate, and the masses everywhere have adopted the slogan: 'Czechs and Jews—both are victims.' The Gestapo dominates the larger towns, but the Jews are beginning to return to the smaller towns where they are welcomed by the Czech population.

Despite the establishment of a Czech 'National Aryan Cultural Union' for the spreading of 'enlightenment' on the Jewish question, the Czechs fear the anti-Semitic movement. The decree for the 'Aryanisation' of Jewish property will virtually result in the confiscation by Germans of Czech property, for even the presence of one Jewish director in a business is sufficient to stigmatise it as Jewish. Several Ministers have protested against

the decree as being incompatible with Hitler's promise of autonomy for the Protectorate.

The Protector is therefore doing his utmost to obtain a Czech Government amenable to Nazi wishes, and is said to have demanded a new Cabinet under the leadership of the notorious Czech anti-Semite, Jan Ryol, head of the Fascist group 'Vlajka', which was responsible for recent synagogue burnings.

The Jews themselves are living in constant terror, especially in Moravska-Ostrava and Brno, where anti-Semitic excesses are a daily occurrence. Recently the Jewish Home for Apprentices in Moravska-Ostrava was burnt to the ground, and hooligans have smashed Jewish shops in Brno. The Jews in Prague are afraid to visit synagogues, which are constantly threatened with arson and bombing, and conduct services secretly in cellars. Even here they may be arrested for holding an 'illegal assembly'. The synagogue in Dobruska, near Königgrätz, has been confiscated and 'Aryanized'. Yet all this persecution has had the result of producing a religious revival, especially among the young Jews.

What the Czech Government has refused to do against the Jews is now being carried out by the Protector by decrees. The Protector has forbidden Jews to engage in property transactions, deal in gold and silver, or open up new businesses. Apart from this, attempts are being made to revive the ritual murder agitation against the Jews, and the efforts of the Czech police to prevent anti-Jewish excesses are being nullified by the Germans. Hundreds of Jewish prisoners have been incarcerated in

the old subterranean fortress-prison of Spielberg, in Brno, where they are being treated with the utmost brutality. The result has been intensified emigration. The Prague newspaper, *Narodni Politika*, reported that since Munich 14,500 people have left Czechoslovakia with the aid of the Emigration Department of the Refugee Assistance Bureau. Of this number all but 500 were Jews.

I have taken the above facts from the English Press, only because it has a reputation for truthful reporting. It is not, of course, entirely free from sensation-mongering, but it usually carries out its mission of discovering the truth in an honourable way. Its reports of pogroms in Bohemia and Moravia are therefore not to be regarded as exaggerated. Previously pogroms were unknown to Czechoslovakia. President Masaryk condemned the well-known ritual-murder trial against Jacob Hülsner, because he defended truth against lies. He did not want the Czech people to be misled by the lies of ritual murder.

The first anti-Semitic pronouncements occurred in Slovakia, chiefly through the instrumentality of the Prime Minister, Dr Joseph Tiso. Tiso smoothed Hitler's path to Prague and delivered the Slovak people into his hands. He was by profession a Catholic priest, and lived not by the offerings of his flock, but on the corrupt moneys of his Party. In a telegram of March 14th, 1939, Tiso informed Hitler that his state had become independent and 'had shaken off the (Czech) yoke.' When Hitler visited the Eternal City in May 1938, Pope Pius XI left Rome in protest and ordered the Vatican museum



to be closed. He expressed his 'pain and indignation, that a cross had been raised in the Holy City which was not the Cross of Christ.' A year later, in Berlin, the Slovak Premier greeted the greatest enemy of his Church with outstretched arms. On March 24th, 1939, Tiso declared that Slovakia, which has a total population of 2,500,000 and a Jewish minority of 50,000, must fight its Jews in the spheres of economics and culture. The logic of this is incomprehensible for it is difficult to see how 50,000 people can threaten the independence of a nation of two and a half million. When Tiso was asked by an English journalist why he would grant the Jews no rights, whilst the Germans, who are 12,000 in all, were to enjoy full rights and even a ministerial department of their own, he replied that in the elections the Jews had never formed a Party of their own. The truth, however, is that the Jewish Party in Bratislava had been dissolved and a large number of local Jewish politicians arrested.

Slovakia was the first country where the Jewish problem was to be solved in a radical German manner, the first country, with the exception of Rumania during Goga's tenure of office, which announced that it intended to introduce the Nuremberg laws. Slovakia was the first country after Germany, Austria and Italy to establish concentration-camps. It began a systematic persecution of the Jews that omitted no brutality. The Slovak government consists of pious Catholics, personal friends of the late Father Hlinka who never hesitated to give vent to his anti-Semitic convictions. The warlike Father hated both the Czechs and the Jews.

During Christmas 1937, I was a guest at Rosenberg, in his parish. He had just recovered from a serious illness and was to celebrate the midnight mass. In his sermon he again fulminated against the Jews who had crucified Jesus, who exploited the peasants, spread Marxism and were responsible for all the evils on earth. When I tackled Hlinka with the subject of his anti-Semitism he denied it. On the occasion of his birthday, he invited me to take a glass of wine with him. Among others present were Karol Sidor (said to be Hlinka's illegitimate son), afterwards Deputy Premier of the Central Government and Minister of the Interior for Slovakia, and Karel Mederly, who was later appointed to the Economic Advisory Council. Mederly began to run down the Czechs and the Jews, whereupon I rose from the table with the intention of leaving. But Hlinka took me by the arm and tried to pour oil on the troubled waters of our argument. However, we remained irreconcilable enemies. It was strange that Hlinka had a sort of fatherly affection for me and introduced me to all his political friends, including Tiso.

I had had opportunities of observing Tiso in the Czech Parliament as a member of the Opposition—a clever, cunning and temperamental speaker, but full of lies; fond of shaking his fist and placing his hands akimbo. Later, he managed to control his temper, but allowed it full rein again when he sought help in Berlin for Slovakia. Slovakia was given its independence, only to be later occupied by German troops and dismembered by Hungary. In the Vienna arbitration Italy and Germany

had sealed the fate of Slovakia and Carpatho-Russia. The two friends shared the booty. Italy obtained economic and political concessions, whilst Germany acquired territory. Assurances were given to Hungary, merely as a safety-valve.

In the days that followed, the Carpatho-Ukrainian Minister of the Interior, Dr Edmund Bacinsky, informed me that as member of the commission in Vienna, he was given a map of the new frontiers by von Ribbentrop, according to which Mukacevo and the capital Uzhorod were to remain in the possession of Carpatho-Ukraine. But when the treaty was drawn up, the exact opposite was the case. Bacinsky was also received by Hitler in Berchtesgaden in the critical days, and later, he likewise declared that the solution of the Jewish question was urgent. When he resigned office however he reviled his erstwhile ministerial colleagues who had established concentration camps in his home-land. The Government in Chust, following the example of Slovakia, had also introduced Draconian measures against its opponents, but the Jews were not troubled. Volosin was a priest, and in contrast with Tiso, has remained one. In Slovakia, however, Jewish persecution took such extreme forms, that the Czechs were indignant. Beran immediately stated that he did not agree with the Slovak treatment of the Jewish question. Protests were continually being made, but nothing was actually done. The Germans financed anti-Semitism in Bohemia and Slovakia with huge sums of money. Czech newspaper proprietors, like Stribrny, received money from Julius Streicher, whilst the Slovaks

received nothing ; for Hitler and Ribbentrop had no need to strain themselves in Slovakia where the government was anti-Semitic anyway, following in the footsteps of Hlinka, the father of Slovak autonomy.

It is an indisputable fact that Julius Streicher is the greatest and most notorious Jew-baiter in Europe ; but just as indisputable is the fact that Sano Mach, the Slovak Propaganda Minister, who controls public opinion in the new Slovakia, is a worthy disciple. He is the spokesman of the Slovak Government and the 'spiritual' director of all the excesses directed against the Jews.

My last interview with Sano Mach took place in the lobby of the Hotel Praha in Tatranska Lomnica. I inquired for him at the hotel desk at 11 a.m., only to be informed that he was just performing his toilet ; at 11.30 he was in his bath ; at 12 with the barber. All of which time I waited patiently, for I did not want to let slip this last opportunity of meeting him.

At last Mach came and invited me to take a glass of wine with him. With him was Koloman Megdolen, Director-General of State Spas. The latter acts as Mach's German interpreter, for Mach speaks only three of the four languages current in the former Czechoslovakia—Slovak, Czech and Hungarian. Mach at once got down to 'business'.

'We need time and money,' he told me, 'for the peaceful reconstruction of our country. If, through your international connections, you could interest a powerful English financial group in our spas, we could give them large concessions and possibilities of development.'

I immediately replied : ' How can you expect to float a loan in the City, when you openly pursue anti-Semitic propaganda ? Surely you know that anti-Semitic excesses produce an unfavourable effect in the City. It may be opportune for you, for political reasons, to seek the support of Germany, but that does not mean that you have to imitate German methods, which are not very much liked abroad.'

Mach glanced at Megdolen, who was listening in embarrassment, his lips compressed. Then he tried to clarify his policy :

' What you say is quite right, but you must know that we have nothing against the Jews as such. Our struggle is exclusively against the Jews who have promoted Magyar culture and suppressed our Slovak culture. For, as you know, the Jews in Slovakia have always been the exponents of Magyar culture. Our measures, therefore, are directed against those who have been harmful to the Slovak cause. At the same time, we are not philo-Semites ; we shall not permit the Jews to take a large part in our national reconstruction. We welcome foreign capital, especially that of the Jews. We want the Jews to invest their money with us and to work with us, but we do not want them to overstep the modest limits that we prescribe for them. In return, we shall guarantee them civic rights and shall ensure that peace and order prevail. For of course you know that the reports of Jewish persecution in Slovakia are exaggerated and untrue.'

' But how is your national reconstruction going to affect the Jews ? You yourself blame the Jews for taking

no part in the development of the Slovak people, yet now you are going to prevent them from playing a prominent part in this development by laws and regulations. At the same time you demand that they shall place all their economic resources at your disposal. What you offer the Jews cannot even be called economic privileges. After all, it is quite clear that in a properly ordered state all citizens should enjoy equal rights. In Hungary the Jews have received economic and political concessions from the Magyars. It is therefore not surprising that they showed a tendency to assimilation. Even the Slovaks, who were economically not so well favoured, allowed themselves to be assimilated to the Hungarians. You and your colleagues, in fact the whole Slovak intelligentsia, attended Hungarian schools. Why don't you storm against your fellow Slovaks? From personal experience and observation, I can say that the Jews have not only adapted themselves to the growing Slovak culture, but have also supported it to the best of their ability. Your most important Slovak writer Géza Vámos, for example, is a Jew. The "Slovenska Matica", your cultural academy, owes the greater part of its material support to the Jews. So why do you want to make the new generation responsible for the failings of an earlier one? Make your peace with the Jews, and you will have peace with the whole world.'

Mach broke in hastily:

'Then you admit that the Jews are an international body and wage war on their enemies.'

'Unfortunately I can't admit that,' I replied in a dry

tone that did not escape Mach. He swallowed hard, then said :

‘ Well, let’s drink rather to the Slovak cause.’

Raising my glass, I said : ‘ To the Slovak cause. May it bring about justly and peacefully the happiness of all its citizens.’

Here Megdolen felt himself obliged to add : ‘ And may world-Jewry come to its senses and give up its unholy war.’

‘ You are mistaken,’ I said. ‘ The Jews, in my opinion, are unfortunately not warlike, nor internationally united enough, otherwise they would react differently to events. But anti-Semitism and persecution are welding this people together. Every pressure produces a counter-pressure.’

Mach poured out another glass of wine. ‘ Let’s leave politics,’ he said. ‘ It won’t get us anywhere. Let’s drink instead.’

When, half an hour later, I took my departure, he called after me :

‘ You’ll only tell them *good* things about us in England, won’t you ?’

‘ The truth,’ I replied from the doorway. ‘ Nothing but the truth.’

The Czechs will not let themselves be provoked and exploited as a political instrument against the Jews. At last the ultra-nationalist Czechs have realised that the Jews have been an integral support of the Republic, and will continue to be so whether as emigrants or at home.

The Jews are fighting for the Czech cause. The Czech and Jewish problems are to-day a common problem. Slovakia, however, has submitted to the devil with heart and soul. The psalmist says: 'Deep calls unto deep' and in Bohemia the Czechs and Jews have met in the depths.

If there were no more human solution of the Jewish question, then in the last resort there could be the Jewish State. But this Hitler also denies the Jews by inciting the Arabs against them. Through the Jewish question he hoped to divert attention from his own plans which threatened Europe and the world. It was not the existence of the Jews that was here at stake, but that of all citizens who wished for peace on earth.



## *Chapter Seven*

### THE FASCIST GENERAL GAYDA AND THE JEWS

NOT SO LONG AGO THE WORLD PRESS FREQUENTLY DISCUSSED the prospects of the Fascist General Gayda, who at one time was regarded as the coming man in Czechoslovakia. For the moment, however, the Führer of the Germans, Austrians, Memellanders, Czechs, Slovaks and all the inhabitants of German living-space, present and to come, has put an end to Rudolf Gayda's political prospects.

In the first weeks after the German invasion numerous arrests were made, as it was desired to show the world that Prague was a breeding-ground of Communism and Marxism, for even the ordinary German looked with disfavour on the conquest of Prague and he had to be given some justification. Hitler was intended to appear as the saviour from the Marxist terror and in this his like-minded comrade Gayda was to help him. The Germans, however, failed to win the sympathies even of the Czech Fascists and the Gestapo was in an embarrassing position, for the arrest of each Fascist resulted in a hail of protests.

It had generally been expected before this that Gayda, who enjoyed some favour with Hitler, would finally come into power. In the few months following the severe territorial losses, the Fascists in Bohemia and Moravia had increased their propaganda, and the formation of a Government by Gayda had been regarded as inevitable. President Hacha had often received Gayda and had had long conversations with him, but his appointment as

Minister did not materialise. Gayda wanted the Premiership: the President was willing to offer him the portfolio of Minister for Defence. Gayda then asked for the Ministry of the Interior, but his wish remained unfulfilled.

Shortly before Hitler's invasion, Gayda had wanted to solve the Jewish question. This had become prominent thanks to the intensive propaganda of the Agrarian Party against Benes, the Jews and the Freemasons, who were accused of responsibility for the collapse of Czechoslovakia. The Beran Government, which had fathered the anti-Jewish movement, was faced with a dilemma. It had not listened to the warnings of friends, including the writer of these lines, and the first anti-Semitic announcements in the Press produced resounding effects among the Czechs, but more especially among people abroad. Exports decreased, a boycott of Czech products was rumoured, the English loan was seriously threatened, and the Government had to do something to save its face. Rudolf Beran, as head of the Government, ordered a Jewish law to be prepared. For weeks its clauses were discussed, and finally it was to be presented to the full Assembly. The President of the Republic, however, refused to sign the law as it stood, and it was referred back for revision. In the meantime the Germans had left nothing undone in order to solve the problem by extreme economic measures most damaging to the Jews.

The solution had been most urgently demanded by the Fascists, but the projected law caused serious disturbances in the internal economics of Czechoslovakia itself. Confidence in business declined, foreign trade

diminished still further, and the result was a crisis such as had never before been experienced. Emigration on a large scale began; Jewish capitalists, who had hitherto proudly exhibited their Czech loyalty, now preferred to leave the country and liquidate their businesses. The Czechs saw this with regret, and declared that this was not necessary. Whereas only a few weeks before a partial emigration of the Jews was favoured, the officials now realised that this would also mean an emigration of Jewish capital. Beran advised his Jewish friends to transfer their residence abroad for a few months; then they could come back. He wanted to protect the Jews, who were of course his friends, but he could not possibly do this in opposition to the whole people—so he said.

General Gayda, who had enjoyed no pleasant position in the first and second Republics, wished to make political capital of this dilemma and a few weeks before Hitler's invasion, through friends of his who were acquainted with me, he asked me for suggestions regarding the solution of the Jewish problem, which would be acceptable to both the Jews and the Fascists. In a detailed discussion I had, I was informed that they wanted to solve the Jewish problem not on racial lines, as in Slovakia, but according to the national and economic requirements of the prevailing economic crisis. At about this time, following an ordinance of the Ministry for Economics, Jewish directors had been removed from leading positions in Banks and businesses, and especially from heavy industry and stock-companies. This measure, which first began with the Motoring Club, resulted in the silent expulsion of

Jews from economic life. This only caused confidence in business to sink still more. The Jewish magnates were replaced by faithful Party members who in a few weeks only succeeded in depressing industry still further through inexperience. Gayda declared, on the advice of his political friends, that he condemned this procedure. Then he accepted my proposals which he wanted to publish in a political statement with the idea of putting them into practice as soon as he obtained power. This possibility was destroyed a few days later by Hitler's invasion.

Gayda had intended the solution of the Jewish question to be as follows: he wanted to protect the Czech Jews who had fought for the Czech cause, and deal with them honourably and justly. (The Jews had great doubts about this for they expected from him only severe laws and the introduction of the Nuremberg code, which had been demanded by his colleague Stribny, who was subsidised by the *Stürmer* and had been charged with corruption.) The Czech Jews, although enjoying his protection, were to surrender their concerns to Aryans. The Government was to pay 50 per cent of their value in transferable currency. The rate of exchange was to be 300 crowns to the pound (instead of the official 140) payable abroad. By this means Czech requirements could have been satisfied. For the purpose of this financial transaction the Jews were to make a loan of at least £2,000,000, for which all enterprises were to act as security. Gayda, as well as the Government, had no real idea of the actual Jewish capital; it was estimated as two milliard kronen,

which included Bank deposits and bonds, which were all to be surrendered. The Banks had had to block Jewish accounts; Jews were allowed to draw only fifteen hundred kronen weekly, even then requiring special permission. The export of articles of value, including necessary clothes and other such things also required special permission. As to taking out articles of jewellery, etc., the Jews had to pay 30 per cent of their value. These measures, however, were still not sufficient to satisfy the artificially stirred up public opinion. Gayda wanted to go further and restore confidence in business by a process of nationalisation, which was to be paid for by foreign Jews, that is to say by English and American Jews. A second category of Jews, who professed German nationality, were to emigrate penniless and be deported back to Germany. The Czech Jews were to have no right in partaking in the cultural or economic activities of the Czech people; instead, the Government would assist their emigration to Palestine if the Jews could supply the necessary money.

With Hitler's entry into Czechoslovakia, Gayda thought his great political chance had come. He had several conversations with the Protectorate officials, which dealt chiefly with his forming a Czech legion in the German Reichswehr. But the Germans soon dropped him. Gayda's faithful following—in spite of the Fascist's obtaining no success in the communal elections in Prague—and the fact that in the provinces he was the political leader from whom revolt against the Germans was expected, made him unpopular with the German officials.

Disappointed in his hope of becoming Prime Minister, he angled for the favour of the German officials, at the same time trying to preserve his support among the rebellious Czech population, but the latter could no longer be kept in hand. They joined in incidents and sabotage against the Germans and the more patriotic of the Czech Fascists were arrested. Of these arrests the Press said little, for in all negotiations with the Government the question of arrests was brought forward and von Neurath's position became increasingly difficult.

Gayda was carefully watched by the Gestapo and it was even rumoured that he had been arrested. The Gestapo, however, feared that his arrest would only further inflame the embers of Czech nationalism, and although not actually in prison, he is to all intents and purposes a prisoner of the Gestapo. His efforts to form a Fascist legion have failed, for all military formations have been dissolved. There was indeed no great hurry in dissolving the Czechoslovak army, for it enjoyed the confidence of the whole people. At its head was the former premier Sirovy who enjoyed much sympathy among the Germans, and was included from the beginning in the suite of the German General von Brauchitsch and was always made prominent by the Germans on public occasions in order to prove that they wanted peaceful collaboration with the Czechs.

When, after some two weeks' mastery in Prague, the Gestapo passed the word round that the synagogues should be set on fire as were those in Berlin and Vienna, it was Gayda who protested. In this he had the support

of the whole Czech people and of the Government. They wanted no imitation of medieval practices nor did they want to arouse the hostility of foreign countries. The German officials tried in vain to force the Czechs to carry out their command, for the Czechs realised that in the struggle against the common enemy, the Jews were their true and faithful allies. Thus, on the evening when the synagogues were to be given over to flames, the Czech Government placed strong police guards in front of them. Other anti-Jewish excesses were similarly prevented.

It is not impossible that Gayda may come into power, for the Czech Jews know that, anti-Semite though he is, he is better than the German officials. However that may be, Gayda has not given up his plan for solving the Jewish question, for he knows that this will put him into possession of Jewish capital.

## *Chapter Eight*

### ACTIVITIES OF THE GESTAPO

THE CZECHS WERE VERY MUCH EMBITTERED AT BEING left in the lurch by their Democratic allies. After the disruption of Czechoslovakia in September 1928, it was a matter of indifference whether the 'Czech rump', as the German Press called the Republic, was occupied or not, for the body of the State had been organically destroyed and was no longer capable of independent life. Further there had begun a system of espionage by Germans. When I visited foreign friends in the Hotel Esplanade in November 1938, I was warned by the political police that the Gestapo had their agents there and that I should be cautious. We all knew who the Gestapo agents were and that all the guests were being watched, but nothing could be done about it, for the German Secretary of State turned every arrest into a major political incident and this it was desired to avert at all costs. In fact, tremendous efforts were made to pacify and soothe the Germans, since it was known that the Anglo-French frontier guarantees would not be implemented and that Hitler could not be relied upon to keep his word.

That the Gestapo has its agents everywhere is no longer a secret and in Prague they had been at work for years, observing the activities of German immigrants, and later of the Czechs. When the Czech Government finally found itself compelled, for reasons of foreign policy, to forbid the political activities of the emigrés, it had apparently forgotten that the founders of the Czech state had



themselves been exiles two decades ago and had laid the foundation of the State while in exile. The Gestapo also had the task of watching the Henlein Party and its officials. Everyone was aware that the latter were the forerunners of National Socialism, yet the Ministry of the Interior adopted the erroneous view that toleration of the Sudeten German party was a Democratic act and that at the same time it might be employed in weakening the Leftists. The peculiar position of the political Parties was such, however, that no Government could be formed except by a coalition of Parties, if a parliamentary regime was to continue. And such a continuance was desired by everyone.

The officials of the Protectorate proclaim that they already possess full power in Bohemia and Moravia. The Czech shadow government (it cannot be described in any other way, not being free to act as it desires) claims that *it* still holds power. The truth, however, is that power is in the hands of the Gestapo. The Gestapo controls the whole political, economic, and to a large extent, the cultural life of the Czechs. But although the Gestapo may confiscate the funds of the Bank and 'Aryanise' industrial concerns it can do little to change the soul of the people.

Incidentally, as far as 'Aryanisation' is concerned, the Czechs have at last realised that it is merely an excuse for the 'Germanisation' of their industries, and owing to the vigorous representations of Czech political circles and the pressure of public opinion, it was recently announced that there would be no more 'compulsory' Aryanisation. In any event, however, it is not necessary

for compulsion to be applied, for the Czech and Moravian Jews have become so terrified that they prefer to sacrifice their businesses voluntarily. This fear on the part of the Jews is naturally exploited by the Gestapo in order to blackmail them.

The Germans had planned their invasion with the greatest of care. I observed that practically every German soldier was equipped with maps and written instructions. Hardly had the first soldiers entered the country than they occupied the most important places and buildings. So quickly was this done that no resistance was possible. At 9 o'clock in the morning of March 15th, the vaults of all the Banks were already under lock and key and the National Bank was under German administration. On the second day all Bank Managers were informed by the 'Special Currency Department of Prague' that all Jewish accounts must be blocked and that even Aryans were to be permitted to draw only fifteen hundred kronen weekly. The Jewish accounts thus became worthless. In certain cases, however, Czechs nominally took over accounts of Jewish friends and so saved something for them.

All the schools were occupied and turned into German barracks. The children were given holidays of indefinite duration. The display of armed force was misleading, for control did not really rest with the army. It was the Gestapo and the Storm Troops which managed affairs and carried out the arrests.

In the early period the streets were closed at night to the civil population—at first from nine in the evening

to six in the morning, and then from eleven in the evening till six in the morning—for it was then that the large troop transports travelled through on their way to the east of the Republic. It was also during these hours that most of the Gestapo arrests took place.

It cannot be claimed that the police force of Democratic Czechoslovakia was exactly one of the best. It had always fulfilled its mission of criminal surveillance from a political standpoint but had imprisoned many innocent people who had become politically suspect and whom the judges were obliged to set free when they appeared in court. The courts complained of the multitude of search-warrants taken out by the police, but the police had the chief say for the Ministry of the Interior was only too glad to use their services for the supervision of politically undesirable elements. Thus the Communists, especially, were frequently imprisoned. True, they were the cause of much concern, yet fundamentally they were harmless patriots, intensely Czech in feeling, who worked for the welfare of the Republic, although given to big words and bold action. The political police kept a card-index of politically 'reliable' citizens and the Gestapo agents kept an eye open for this index. Some years previously they had stolen the index of the Refugee Aid Committee; this time, however, the police managed to foil them.

Immediately after the invasion of the German troops, the Gestapo set a guard over Police Headquarters. The officials had to submit to their demands and a systematic search was begun into the documents concerning political

delinquents. They were in utter disorder. The Gestapo first arrested all those who had hitherto been under observation, that is, all those who had been prominent in public life. The smaller 'criminals' were to receive their due later. The documents dealing with these, however, had disappeared—the Czech police had destroyed them in time. Thus for some time the small fry succeeded in avoiding arrest. But their joy was short-lived. During the following weeks the Gestapo examined the papers of everyone applying for exit-visas and anyone who in any way politically suspect or had no influential German friends was immediately arrested or refused permission to leave the country.

This act of sabotage on the part of the Czech police made the Gestapo dependent upon them for information. Of course, a number of Sudeten-Germans were introduced into the police-force to act as spies and interpreters, and Jews were arrested in order to compel them to divulge the names of rich and influential Jews or political opponents. But the Czech police, keeping a close eye on the activities of the Gestapo, continued their work of sabotage. Whenever anyone was to be arrested, or had already been arrested, the whole of Prague knew it within a few hours. In cafés, where the waiters knew their guests, the information was handed on. Of course the Gestapo had numbers of agents in the cafés and places of amusement, listening carefully to conversations, usually in the guise of harmless guests, dancers or hostesses, but the Czechs had likewise organised an intelligence service and often knew who the Gestapo

agents were. Furthermore, since the Czechs knew that the Czech cafés were all under observation they usually patronised the German ones where no spies were to be found, or those favoured by the Reichswehr officers who ate well and cheaply and paid with money from the vaults of the Czech National Bank.

An anonymous denunciation to the Gestapo was often sufficient for an arrest to take place. Thus the Director of the Sekuritas Insurance Company, together with some thirty employees, was arrested merely because two German employees claimed that they were Communists. In many cases the accuser was unknown. An action for slander was out of the question. The Sekuritas people were soon liberated for lack of evidence, but they were informed that they must not dismiss the two German employees.

I was myself present when a Jewish house-owner received a phone call from the Gestapo to say that he must excuse his German tenants from payment of rent, since they were unable to pay; should he attempt to collect the rent, he would be arrested.

Those arrested were taken by the Gestapo in large cars which speeded through the city day and night to the cells at police headquarters in Bartholomew Street where nine or ten were obliged to sleep on one straw mattress. They were usually beaten when questioned, compelled to humiliate themselves and shout 'Long Live the Führer'. Viennese were for the most part in control, assisted by sturdy peasants from the country. If there were not sufficient grounds for an arrest, the

accused would be taken into custody on suspicion of breaking currency regulations, although this really did not belong to the jurisdiction of the Gestapo. After nine days in custody, during which nothing would be proved and no confession be forced from them, they would be handed over in bloody condition to the currency officials who would set them free since they would no longer be in a fit state to be questioned. After a few days, however, they would be fetched again.

Those who were taken to the Pankrac prison were the more fortunate, for there were Czech warders there, although under the supervision of German officials. One would be condemned for sabotage, for giving wrong information to an army-chauffeur, or for not wanting to give an answer to a German question. Major crimes of this kind would of course be handed on to be dealt with by a higher authority.

The leader of the Czech political police declared to me at the beginning of May, 1939, that they no longer had any power and were merely tools in the hands of the Gestapo. On public and ceremonial occasions the police officials had to hoist the swastika flag on the gendarmerie and other official buildings; failure to do so might result in immediate arrest and a considerable fine. Even the traffic was supervised by the Gestapo, a few Czech police regulating the vehicles but at the orders of the Gestapo or the uniformed German officials, of whom there appeared to be a huge army. The latter were for the most part billeted in schools and had at their disposal a large number of cars.

Long cars fitted with benches were often to be seen travelling through the city containing some dozen uniformed policemen from Berlin, Munich and Dresden. The people went their way and paid no attention, but in their hearts was the fire of contempt and shame. The Germans knew it and did everything to win over the confidence of the Czechs. But in vain. In Germany much is said of Democratic, freedom-loving England being 'Perfidious Albion'. The adjective is really appropriate to 'Frau Germania', for the means by which she sought to ensnare the soul of the Czech people is more than perfidious.

The Gestapo makes a practice of sending its agents into shops to listen to conversations and to question the owner. Although these usually speak fluent Czech, on the whole, the Czechs have a wonderful instinct in knowing whether they are dealing with an *agent provocateur*. I was, however, witness of how a man began a conversation in Czech with a tram driver on the second day of the German domination and asked him what he thought of the unexpected guests. The driver gave vent to his feelings and said he would like to see Hitler hanged. The man arrested him on the spot. Traffic had to be held up for twenty minutes until an inspector came along to drive the tram. The passengers in the tram went white as death as they gazed at the *provocateur*, but he merely summoned a policeman, who, on seeing his warrant, could do nothing but take the driver into custody.

On another occasion a Reichswehr soldier made to arrest a Czech in a publichouse, and was punched in the

face. A free fight developed in which everyone joined. Things would have gone badly for the German soldier if he hadn't quickly disappeared, to return a few moments later with a troop of soldiers who arrested all present and closed up the business.

When a soldier or a German drops into a public-house for a glass of beer, he sits at his table alone, ignored. Only the waiter speaks to him, in German, to take his order. The German soon leaves, for the atmosphere is strained and inimical. Even the Czech street-walkers will have nothing to do with German soldiers.

Whereas the Czechs once received their German friends with open-hearted hospitality, to-day they have only hatred and contempt for them. The Gestapo agents have the task of noting and preventing expressions of anti-German sentiment, and in this they have their hands full. The masses fume with rage and the Gestapo works away in its secret closets. However the Czech police know exactly what is going on there, and are continually creating difficulties for the Gestapo agents with whom they work. They pretend to be friends with them, while distributing bribes.

Bribery in fact is rife throughout the Gestapo and any state which is built up on corruption must collapse internally, for its foundations are rotten. This is one of the hopes cherished by the Czechs.

In the course of his speech at Hartford, U.S.A., Dr Benes said: 'The Czech nation is united in the firm belief in a new liberation and we here must share that belief. The Czech nation has passed through five great



revolutions, and it will triumphantly pass also through the present one which is a struggle for the restoration of the Masaryk Republic. . . . The dictatorships are rotten within, morally, financially, economically ; beneath an apparent unity there is dissension and rivalry. At the first serious shock this is bound to reveal itself by disintegration and collapse.'

## Chapter Nine

THE GESTAPO AND THE TELEPHONE SERVICE

WHEN ON MARCH 15TH, THE 'REICHSWEHR' MARCHED into Prague and occupied the National Bank, tanks and the green-painted cars of the Gestapo lay in the *Bredovska ulice* while in the building itself there were some dramatic moments.

Agents of the Gestapo were installed in a building adjoining the Post Office, and there was a censorship of telegrams and later of letters, but this lasted only a few days.

The Democratic Czech wholeheartedly resented this serious intrusion into the private life of the citizen; there was an outburst of indignation, and the censorship was soon lifted.

At the same time, all long-distance calls were tapped, especially those of foreign correspondents. A special office was installed in the Post Office of the *Stepanska ulice* for the use of foreign correspondents, so that there could be closer supervision of their activities. Calls in this room could be more easily checked than those transmitted from private houses. Immediate legal action was also taken against some foreign correspondents who had spread allegedly false rumours. A large number of foreign correspondents were arrested, if for no other reason, on the usual trumped-up currency charges, and the representative of the Polish News Service is still under arrest to this day.

At the General Post Office, a large number of people, the majority of them foreigners, telephoned their relatives

living abroad who were anxious about them. The rush was so great that, during the evening, the trunk lines were booked for many hours in advance, and, although I had, on many occasions, booked priority calls to London, I had to wait for hours on end. Among those waiting, were a large number of spies who chatted amiably with the crowd, many of whom were about to emigrate and were awaiting a visa or a permit. If any one spoke suspiciously or received any disapproving message, he was arrested immediately he left the telephone kiosk. Every one who made a telephone call had, under a new decree, to give his name. Most connections were made at the exchange by Gestapo officials, and Czech operators made no secret of this. When, some days later, the Gestapo also began to tap local calls, and had to introduce special apparatus for this purpose, the news spread throughout Prague within a few hours, and private telephone calls were now made more cautiously than official calls. No further telephone messages were given, not even from public call-boxes, as these were too closely watched and tapped. During the first few weeks, it was impossible to obtain any connection with Slovakia or the Carpathian Ukraine, since not only had subscribers there been badly intimidated and made suspicious but the invaders were also thoroughly disliked.

The fact that a man had friends or relations abroad was a sufficient reason, in the eyes of the Gestapo, to justify an examination, which rarely lasted for less than nine or ten hours. The relatives of a man undergoing examination were never informed as to his whereabouts,

and nobody dared to enquire directly from the police, as this would have drawn their suspicions upon himself. If one had asked for a foreign diplomat or consular official, one had to be prepared for a visit on the following day from Gestapo officials, who watched the house for weeks. As a first step against suspects all mail was confiscated. Foreign newspapers were, naturally, never delivered. A sensible man countermanded his order himself or simply refused delivery. At the same time, all foreign newspapers disappeared from the news kiosks, and in their place Nazi German papers appeared, which naturally contained only the most outrageous slanders upon Czechs and Jews. Thus every one who desired to live in peace and freedom tried to make himself as inconspicuous as possible.

It might be expected that long-distance calls would have been diminished in number by these measures, but this was not the case; at this time Czechs and Jews felt a natural desire to exchange some words of comfort with relatives and friends. In addition, there were the many foreigners, either visiting or permanently residing in Prague, who could not leave owing to travelling regulations. They had in fact to queue up in front of the Gestapo offices to obtain permission to leave, and there were other formalities to go through if they were to take with them or at least save their property. And so the Gestapo had a special department dealing with people who had had telephone calls. Often, agents of the Gestapo came to the houses and offices of telephone subscribers and questioned them. After arrest—usually by Czech police officials—suspects were often kept for more than

a week before being interrogated. A Fascist lawyer complained to me that he could not arrange for his client, a Czech Fascist himself, to be questioned after nine days' arrest, although he could prove his innocence, while most 'Aryan' lawyers—others were no longer admitted—could do no more than attempt to discover what 'crime' their client was supposed to have committed. Then began the intervention of important Czech leaders, and this was in many cases successful, unless impecunious Jews were involved. Most of the Jews who were taken into 'protective custody' by the Gestapo were rich people and were only in danger from the Gestapo itself. There was, of course, no escape from the hands of the Gestapo, if it did not intend to allow the delinquent to get away. All this made the telephone system a hell and the Gestapo the devil personified.

During this period, I could send no reports to the newspapers which I represented, and had to limit myself to anonymous telegrams, which even so remained in the hands of the censor for four or five hours. When the German troops entered, Czech patriots informed their relatives and friends in the provinces by sending the following greetings telegram: 'Long live the national idea. Prague finally German. Indescribable rejoicing. Best wishes to all German brothers.' I saw such a telegram in the hands of a young Czech postal official at a telegram acceptance counter. It was signed with a 'Heil Hitler', but was written in faulty German and with many spelling mistakes. The official accepted the telegram without a word and read it with a flushed face. If a telegram was in

a language other than German or Czech, one had to sign a sworn declaration on the back that it contained no secret meaning, and to produce one's identity papers. My brother, who came from London in December, 1938, thus sent back a telegram containing the single word, 'Arrived'. To his great astonishment, he was asked to produce his passport, and all the details contained in this were entered on the telegram blank. All postal sacks sent abroad were naturally opened, as were all railway deliveries of packets, particularly those consigned to Western Europe. All my luggage, which was addressed to Harwich, was forcibly opened, a kit-bag slit open, the locks and fastenings of my portmanteau and zip-fastened cases destroyed and their contents plundered, from fountain pens and automatic lighter and pipe to underwear and clothes. I am not the only one to whom this happened. Any action for damages was naturally out of the question. It was, however, not only these large packages which were opened, but also letters coming into the country without any indication on the envelope of the sender. Even if the letter contained only some private message, it could still cause trouble to the receiver. I wrote to a friend in Prague that I had made close contact with Czech circles in this country. This brought about his arrest, although he was an Aryan, a Fascist and an associate of one of the most important Czech statesmen. The Czechs there sought to renounce their foreign friends in an attempt to prove that they were in no way in agreement with the actions of other countries. In a civil legal case in which I was called as a witness, I telephoned my

lawyer, who, two days later, wrote to me asking that, in view of our former friendly relations, I should not telephone him again, since the Gestapo had carried out a search of his house, even though our conversation had referred only to the case in question.

The supervision of all telephone subscribers and receivers of letters was naturally continued, and this alone necessitated a considerable staff. The German authorities introduced German post offices and through these one could send money to Germany as the sacks were not opened. German officials also assisted at the customs stations and plundered the property of passengers who were without recourse to law if they wished to go abroad. There were, however, only a few who were able to flee abroad, and of those only a very small number were Jews. Incidentally Hitler has had bad luck with his Jews, since he has gained more from Austria and Czechoslovakia than ever left Germany.

The Czechs still give the Jews their sympathy and see in them allies against the common enemy, and together they have learnt to live without the comforts of civilisation such as telephones, wireless and postal communications.

## *Chapter Ten*

### SABOTAGE

WHEN THE IDEA OF SABOTAGE FIRST MADE ITS APPEARANCE in Soviet Russia, it was thought to be a diabolical invention of imaginative journalists. The administrators of the Four Year Plan, however, can testify to its reality. What the workers throughout Germany are to-day doing in the factories is actually nothing less than sabotage, despite the severe punishments meted out by the Gestapo.

The population acknowledges the Government as the final arbiter in the fight with the Protectorate officials, but is seldom in agreement with its actions. Nor can they storm against it, for that might cause the Gestapo simply to dissolve it and forbid any further Government to be formed. All the Ministers receive their appointments not from President Hacha but from the Protectorate officials, who can as easily remove them, and the Protectorate naturally approves only of a Government in which it has confidence and such a Government cannot enjoy the full confidence of the people.

In the first weeks of the occupation the Czechs threatened to resist the Gestapo by force, but they were persuaded to be moderate by their more sensible compatriots. In Pilsen, for example, some ten Czech youths threw vitriol at forty German soldiers. In retaliation, three times that number of Czechs and Jews were arrested and the Jews had to pay a fine of more than three hundred thousand kronen. The arrests increased to such an extent that the Czechs decided to employ other tactics. The opposition went 'underground' and all that remained



on the surface was silent hostility. The Germans themselves have discovered that silence is not merely golden, but the best way of keeping out of concentration camps; they have a saying :

Lieber Gott, mach mich stumm,  
Dass ich nicht nach Dachau kumm,  
(Dear God, make me dumb,  
That I to Dachau do not come.)

The Czechs walked past the German soldiers in demonstrative silence and paid no heed to them.

At the time of the occupation exit-permits were introduced and no one was allowed to leave the country without obtaining one of these blue printed cards from the Gestapo. In order to acquire one of them it was necessary to queue up for days on end. The personal papers of the applicant were examined and if there were nothing against him he might receive his permit. This, however, did not prevent the Gestapo from arresting him if they wished at the frontier.

Owing to the pressure of applications, the issue of these permits was eventually stopped or limited to Aryans and this circumstance gave the Czech officials an opportunity—they introduced rich Jews as clients to the Gestapo agents and in this way has begun the disintegration of the whole Gestapo system. But while the rich Jews and politicians could thus buy their permits, the poorer members of the community were made to suffer. They were tortured with questions and should they be in

any way suspect, even if their name was similar to that of some Czech agent who had worked against the Gestapo, they were usually arrested.

The singing of Czech songs in public places was forbidden by the Gestapo. Not that the Czechs were in such a happy position that they wanted to sing, but singing patriotic songs was one way of demonstrating against the new regime.

Humour, however, continues to flourish among the Czechs in spite of their plight ; the Protectorate is referred to as the Prospectorate and the Protector accordingly known as the Prospector. The reason for the new regulation prohibiting aeroplanes over Berchtesgaden is said to be that Hitler must not be disturbed while writing the second part of 'Mein Kampf'—to be entitled 'My Smash'. The initials CSR which formerly stood for *Ceskoslovenska Republika* now denote *Calounik Sezral Republiku*—a Paperhanger has swallowed the Republic. Here, too, is a letter which has escaped the attention of the censor :

'As you may well imagine none of us are pleased with either the words or the music of the new Czech opera. We do not yet know how it will end, but we hope satisfactorily. At the moment several authors are busily at work on it but we have no reliable information as to whether they are making good progress. Apparently, the casting of the main parts is only provisional. The actors who have been chosen so far have not given complete satisfaction and there is no doubt that there will be changes. As you have probably heard, we have no

proper orchestra or musical instruments. In particular there is a great shortage of percussion instruments, but there will be no lack of players, as there are plenty of enthusiastic musicians here. After all, we are a nation of musicians, are we not? And even if the supply were to prove insufficient, the shortage would certainly be made up by a number of foreign theatres. We are all looking forward to the performance impatiently.'

The Czechs also carried out a mass boycott of the tramways. In the town of Brno, for example, they used this means as a protest against their loss of communal rights and the establishment of a minority rule by a decree of the Protector. Instructions were issued to the population in the form of pamphlets announcing that walking was good exercise. They carried out these instructions faithfully, despite the discomfort caused by the extremely hot weather. The boycott resulted in receipts falling from 160,000 crowns to less than 30,000.

More than half the Czechs in the world live abroad and all are working in the service of the third Czech Republic, aiding their compatriots in the rapid organisation of sabotage. Funds are being supplied chiefly by the American Czechs, as during the World War. From their mother-country they receive reliable reports in spite of strict censorship. Between Paris and Prague there is a regular 'underground' system of couriers by means of whom money is sent into the country and information brought out. The secret organisation distributes pamphlets encouraging the Czechs to remain loyal to their tradition and to trust Benes. Illegal printing presses abound and

continue to work despite seizure by the Gestapo. When the Nazis gave the names of Hitler or Horst Wessel to Masaryk and other streets, the 'underground' workers painted out the new names overnight and restored the old by the morning. Pirate radio transmitters are at work, broadcasting messages of encouragement.

On his arrival in London from the United States, Dr Benes made the following declaration to his fellow-countrymen :

' All of us in America who were aware that the present conditions in Central Europe are only of a temporary character, had two periods of preparatory work. Up to March 15th we all proceeded in a deliberately non-committal manner. Then, however, ensued the period of open warfare against the Nazi usurper. Thanks to American democracy and to the patriotic feelings of American Czechoslovaks, we achieved, within five months, noteworthy results in respect of our organisation and policy. Czechoslovak America is prepared to assist in this new struggle of ours in a united front comprising the huge majority of our people, Czechs, Slovaks, and Carpathian Ruthenians in America. I return to Europe convinced that the Czechoslovak public in America has rapidly realised its task in our movement and will prove a great support to us all. The value of this support is due mainly to the exemplary discipline of our people and in the resolute systematic activity of our organisations.

' The idea of an independent Czechoslovakia enjoys keen and active sympathy in the public opinion and among the politicians of the United States. . . . Our

first task now is to follow the example of our people in America and, especially, to fulfil the wishes of our people at home by mustering all our positive resources for united action in the struggle to restore our democratic Republic.'

In the small provincial towns where control is less strict and where there is a large German minority, the lighting does not function regularly, the water supply is subject to mysterious interference, railway traffic limps along and houses suddenly go up in flames. Most attention, however, is directed to placing obstacles in the way of the German administration. The peasants no longer cultivate their fields as formerly for they have no desire to see the Germans again confiscate their crops as was the case in the last few months. They therefore no longer produce a surplus, only the bare minimum necessary. Machines in factories are subject to mechanical defects which are not quickly remedied. Theft of tools, explosions, breakages of windows, contemptuous inscriptions on walls, curses against the Protectorate officials are daily occurrences. Jews are usually roped in to clean these inscriptions from the walls. Whenever this happens a large crowd of Czechs gathers round, cursing the Jews, but meaning the Germans. Placards and other announcements of the Germans as well as the newspapers in the cafés are smeared with dirt and covered with insulting remarks about the Germans. The German officials are unable to control the situation; in vain are the arrests, in vain are all the threats, in vain the punishments, for

the Czechs are hoping that in time Germany will become so weakened that she will no longer be able to stem the revolts in the Protectorate.

These activities are supported by the Czech population as a whole. Discontent among the workers is widespread and they are being sent in tens of thousands to Germany to work for their conquerors. This transport of unwilling labourers merely results in the spread of the underground movement to Germany where the Czechs are linking up with the German Freedom Front and stirring the German masses to join them in resisting the Nazis.

The Czechs are in fact waging a guerilla warfare which is even more deadly than that in Abyssinia, even though there is no bloodshed. Every day as hundreds of wagons laden with raw materials and food from Czech factories make their way to Germany, the Czechs see how the Germans are plundering and robbing them. The barracks have simply been cleared out and German troops quartered in them. I myself have seen lorries piled high with sleeping bags, blankets and bedsteads. In Pilsen, for example, the Germans took away the entire equipment of a hospital, including the experimental laboratory for cancer research. This confiscation of goods and money is promoted by official quarters and one of the tasks of the Gestapo is to see that no one prevents this transfer of 'German national wealth' out of the 'German living space'.

When the German soldiers descended in hordes upon the city they first bought up all supplies of provisions, especially butter and sausages. The next objects of

their attentions were leather goods; they bought handbags, brief cases, gloves and so on. The great Bata shoe shop in Wenzel Square was sold out immediately. The Czechs soon retaliated, however. Whenever the Germans, who were usually accompanied by Sudeten-German interpreters, wanted to buy anything, they were usually informed that it was sold out. If, for example, a German wanted to buy size eight in shoes, the shop-keeper regretted he had only size seven in stock. Some of the shops refused to serve Germans and were heavily fined. A few shops, mostly those which formerly belonged to Jews, displayed the sign 'Aryan Business', but ninety per cent of the shopkeepers refused to do so. As Aryans and Czechs they considered it a disgrace to culture and civilisation. During the first days the Czechs kept the shops open for only a few hours, but they were ordered to keep them open the whole day. Thereupon the Czechs mobilised all their relations and acquaintances who came and stood in long queues outside the shops, which they proceeded to clear out. This was not purely to forestall the Germans. The Czechs bought all goods that had been imported, for they knew that they would soon be unobtainable owing to lack of foreign currency. This buying fever produced a shortage of cash; there was a rise in prices, until the Gestapo decreed that from March 1st, 1939, prices must not be raised.

Numbers of so-called chain-letters are being spread through Bohemia and Moravia. They are neither signed nor is the sender mentioned. The letters contain words of consolation and courage and quotations from the most

popular poets or writers, urging unity and passive resistance. The receiver is asked to make five copies of such a letter and to forward them to five of his friends.

One of these chain-letters which is now taking its endless course contains the Czech Decalogue :

1. Believe in the full right to an independent state life for eight million Czechs with their thousand-year-old history.

2. Believe in the Justice of History which will not tolerate for long the oppression of that right.

3. Do not believe that we have been living 'for a thousand years in the German Reich'. Go and see for yourself from the history books that it is a lie.

4. Do not believe what the Czech newspapers are writing and what the radio is reporting because it is the Germans who are controlling the Press and the radio.

5. Do not believe that the world has abandoned us.

6. Do not believe that the Czech leaders agree with the Anschluss of Bohemia and Moravia to Germany. They have to speak cautiously in order to retain the leadership.

7. Czech is not only your language but also your mind.

8. Do not attend German festivities.

9. Behave towards the Germans in such a manner that they feel they are strangers here and in the service of injustice and violence.

10. Never forget that the German soldiery has destroyed the fruit of the Czech people's hard labour.

This chain letter ends :



If you want to help restore Czech freedom and share in the Czech victory over the 'pure race', do not break up this chain of national happiness.

Although the Gestapo has organised everything down to the smallest detail, they still could not prevent political 'suspects' from slipping over the frontier. Nor were they able to prevent the destruction of state documents. In the Foreign Ministry many of the files were burned as a precaution, although this could not be done in the other Ministries which the Gestapo had already occupied and where the higher officials who had played any part against Germany were arrested.

The Czechs boycott everything German, whether it be films, newspapers, or shops. They force the German arrangements into chaos without thereby completely destroying order in the country, for they do not want to give the Germans the opportunity to say that the conquest had been necessary because of the unrest. The Reichswehr knows to-day that this excuse of March 14th was untrue, and it was at the time instrumental in preventing numbers of arrests; it was when the civil administration had taken over and General von Brauchitsch left Prague, that arrests began in earnest.

Suicide became a daily occurrence after the invasion, as was the case in Vienna, when Goebbels gleefully rubbed his hands, saying that it was not necessary for him to kill the Jews as they performed that task themselves. Suicide has been the way out for many, even Aryans. I do not wish to call to mind here the number of my

friends who followed this path to freedom. Others have had the courage to live and have attempted to slip illegally across the frontier and here again the German Army has been very decent. In conjunction with the Czech officials they have closed an eye to these little excursions abroad, and have indeed advised people they have had to arrest, to go while the going was good.

At Cadca, already Slovak territory, fifty German soldiers and a few officers crossed the Polish frontier and requested the civic officials to give them quarters; they then demanded the surrender of the keys of the town, whereupon the Mayor, on the pretence that he was going to consult his councillors, informed the police, who together with the Polish soldiers disarmed the Germans. This took place on the same day that Colonel Beck was negotiating in London, and according to a Polish version, on the point of refusing to sign the Anglo-Polish pact because he did not want to spoil his friendship with the Wilhelmstrasse. When he heard the news of this invasion of German troops, he is said to have changed his views. The German troops had attempted to break through with guns and tanks, but they were beaten back successfully by the Polish artillery.

As far as the armaments of the Germans are concerned, I myself saw in Prague how the motorised columns and the tanks were stuck in the snow. The material is so poor that we could not understand how Hitler could have dared in the September crisis to have risked a war.

With his conquest of Czechoslovakia, Hitler has obtained a new supply of raw materials, as well as a supply of

human material which has been accustomed to butter and not to guns. In comparison with the excellent quality of the Czech military material and the quality of its provisions, the German products come off very badly. This bad impression cannot be wiped away by parades of troops who march along with a well-drilled goose-step. We who saw the soldiers marching into Prague saw in their faces signs of under-nourishment. 'They have faces of wood', a Social Democrat remarked to me.

The Prague Germans are very dissatisfied; they expected offices and rewards, but it was the Germans of the Reich and the Austrians who were given all the posts. When the Germans marched in, a Viennese voice announced through the loud-speakers in the streets of Prague the change of Government and requested peace and order. To impress public opinion the Germans mobilised an alms-train for the distribution of soup to the 'poor' and 'hungry' population. For weeks the Press and the wireless had to announce this charity and everywhere huge placards were placed, announcing; 'No one need go hungry, for the National Socialist Welfare provides food for all.' There was much laughter at this for it was known that foodstuff had gone from Bohemia-Moravia to Germany. No one in the Republic had ever gone hungry, for the social services had been highly organised, perhaps better than anywhere else in the world. The Film Companies and Press photographers were ordered to be present at the distribution of the food, and even General Blaskowitz gaily drank his soup (this was of course shown in the film). I was a witness

of this proceeding and saw a crowd of Germans, including women in fur coats, devouring the hot food. But there were no Czechs, not even Czech Fascists.

The spirit of Democracy is still being cherished by the Czechs who are showing open sympathy with the Jews and all those who are being persecuted for their convictions. Czechoslovakia, or rather the inhabitants of Bohemia-Moravia, remains liberal, helping the persecuted with documents and money to escape from the country. There are some, however, who have sold themselves to the Germans—perhaps only to be in a position to betray the Germans later.

Passive resistance, sabotage, bribery of Gestapo officials are all having their effect. In this the Czechs are using means which not only require much intelligence and mental agility, but also prove that neither the attitude of President Hacha nor of the Czech Press can be regarded as treason. The Czechs, in their fight for independence, have betrayed others, for instance the Austrians and Hungarians—but they have never betrayed themselves. A young nation politically, they were always divided internally, but outwardly they presented a united front. When Lord Runciman came to Czechoslovakia, first in a private capacity and later as the envoy of H.M. Government, the Czechs confidently placed their fate in his hands. He was given a royal reception, he was expected to give a just decision. The Czechs turned their faces to Downing Street, ready to pull the chestnuts out of the fire for the Western Democracies, and only submitted when exhorted to do so by their political leaders.

Whoever has witnessed the tragedy of the Czechs at close quarters, has seen perhaps one of the most dramatic periods of World history. The war of 1914 opened up possibilities of freedom for the oppressed nations in the Austro-Hungarian Empire, and freedom was won in 1918 with a bloodless revolution. The bloodless war of 1939, on the other hand, brought a new defeat. The Czechs hope that this defeat will produce a stronger resurrection of their nationhood, and it is in this faith that they carry out their acts of sabotage.

It is not for nothing that Hitler has sent as his representative to Prague a diplomat of the rank of von Neurath.

## *Chapter Eleven*

### THE SLOVAK REBELS

IF ONE WISHES TO REALISE THE IMPORTANCE, THE MEANING and the final aims of a Movement, one has to study its leaders. Any Movement will always be what its leaders make of it and the start of present events in Slovakia was made by the political leaders.

My first meeting with the intellectual leader of the Slovak Movement was made in Prague in 1926, when Andrej Hlinka was a Member of Parliament. Hlinka was already, under the Hungarian regime at the beginning of the century a prototype of the Slovak rebels, and was imprisoned at Szeged by the Hungarians after the massacre of Cernahora, near Ruzomberok. Since then his restless temperament has never allowed him to settle down. During the first years of the Czechoslovakian Republic he was in sharp opposition to Prague, owing to his demands for autonomy and the often-mentioned Pittsburgh Agreement. His closest associate, Professor Tuka, was accused of high treason and his movement suffered a very severe defeat, but as the parson of Ruzomberok, a burning orator and a clever and demagogic politician, he gathered a large following among the Slovak people, which is mainly Catholic. His profession did not prevent him from speaking against the Jews and the freed Czechs, from the pulpit and in the strongest terms. My attacks against him in one of my books brought us together and we were in contact with each other for years. He frequently denied that he was an anti-Semite and often expressed very warm feelings for the Slovak Jews. But the Jewish hatred

was penetrating more and more the consciousness of the Slovak people, although there was no economic reason for it. In Ruzomberok, as a guest of His Reverence, I asked to be brought into contact with the Slovak youth of whom he had many a time spoken to me. He arranged a meeting with Karol Sidor, who later became a Member of Parliament and a Minister. Certainly, he was a friend of Poland, but he was a daring adventurer in politics. Sidor often met us in the club-room of the Chamber of Deputies in Prague as well as at Father Hlinka's house, at Christmas when Hacha was negotiating between the Czechs and Slovaks. I also met his Press Chief, Mach, and last but not least, the Government Chief, Tiso and the Ministers Durcansky and Teplansky. These sponsors of the growing Hlinka movement gave Slovak nationalism, which had taken over the Government through its leaders, a new and adventurous form. While Hodza, Dérer and other leading Slovak politicians fought for Czechoslovakian unity and would wipe out everything from the national spirit which was foreign to the Slovak people (including anti-Semitism!) the others had done everything to sponsor anti-Semitism. Thus began the catastrophe.

The Government leader, Tiso, a temperamental orator, a clever parliamentarian, a practising parson and a professional politician, seldom uttered anti-Semitic sentiments. That he was no pro-Semite was obvious from his membership of the Catholic Party, which was later renamed the Hlinka Party. Hlinka was the spiritual leader, Tiso his administrator and Sidor his protégé. The Slovak people, who had led a miserable existence for

two years, were liberated by the Czechs and elevated to the rank of a nation, but they had only a few spiritual leaders and thus the Church tied the believing masses to it and misused them for its own political ends. The Church, i.e. the Vatican, could obviously never agree with the special arrangements of the Slovak priest, but as he was the defender and protector of Catholicism he enjoyed special privileges.

During the last few weeks before the March catastrophe, the Czechs had seen in Sidor the honest agent of peace between the two disgruntled nations, but history has proved that he tried to run with the hare and hunt with the hounds, for which he was finally dropped by the Slovaks. The youth stands behind him. In March, his comrade in arms, the Chief of Propaganda, Mach, accused him of treachery and high treason. In spite of the immense influence which Mach possesses, he did not succeed in bringing his opponent into court.

The Jewish decrees took away their livelihood from many doctors and now there is a shortage of them, but none of the Jews wishes to stay in spite of all the enticing promises. Tiso is now altogether under the thumb of his adviser, Karmasin, who is the leader of the small German minority and to whom the German Reichskanzler listens. Tiso is, in other words, made a willing tool of the triumvirate Durcansky, Teplansky and Mach, which is ruling the Slovak State, since Parties are forbidden and the workers have been silenced. When the Hungarians cut up Slovakia, the Jews had preferred the most severe Hungarian Jewish decrees to the Slovak whip, and in



so doing provided a good argument for the Slovak anti-Semites. The Slovak state lacks any basis of independence and no doubt will collapse. The Hungarians hoped to regain their lost territories and suppress the Slovaks still more than before. The existence of the Slovak Jews is, however, greatly endangered. Scarcely had the Slovaks gained their independence than the first anti-Jewish agitation commenced, and the Prague Government had to intervene. As they could not take revenge on the Hungarians, they made the Jews their scapegoat and adopted terrible forms of persecution. As soon as the world Press had reported the anti-Semitic excesses, the Slovak Government, through its Press Chief, issued a denial. Mach complained to me that by this the Jews hindered the construction of Slovakia. My arguments to the contrary fell on deaf ears, and Mach was offended and tried to calm me down. On the occasion of the Slovak national holiday, and again on Hitler's fiftieth birthday, when the Jews were driven out of cafés and beaten up until they were senseless, we reported truthfully, but the Slovak Government issued denials to Havas, Reuter and even the German News Service. One day, before my departure from Prague, terrible pogroms took place at Trnava, where a certain Dr Müller was seriously injured, and even the bishop, Dr Jantausch, intervened without success. Dr Müller died, as no medical aid was forthcoming. We, as foreign correspondents, had plenty of opportunity to convince ourselves of the correctness of these reports, and furthermore, our informants were not only Christians but consular officials as well who were

not anxious to get themselves disliked or hasten their recall, which action would undoubtedly have followed any indiscretion. One realises further that the relations between the Slovaks and the Jews were still extremely harmonious ; the Slovakian peasant had seen that the Jew was a master and the Slovakian intelligentsia had still, up to some years ago, been very Hungarianised. All the Slovakian politicians without exception, were educated in Hungarian schools. Mach likes using the argument that the Jews promoted Hungarian assimilation and that they had no time for Slovak culture. Certainly the Jews were for the most part Hungarianised, as the Slovak politicians were themselves, and the Hungarians of the pre-war era had promised concessions and economic privileges during the war. Slovak culture, however, had very feeble beginnings, and when, during the first years of the Republic, the Slovak Jews had helped in its foundations, the race-consciousness of the Slovaks was shown in its crudest form. No Jews attained a high position, either in government service or in the army, and no Jew ever received any particular recognition for his services.

The Slovak peasants allowed their sons to study after the liberation so that they could become doctors like the sons of the Jewish inn-keeper. But the Slovak administration had no room for this academic youth, no space without endangering the Czech officials, who were the executors of the state ideas. Thus the hatred against the Czechs was fostered and was then transferred to the Jews, even though these played no noteworthy role in public life. If there are evil tidings from Slovakia in the

World Press, these are only an echo of the untamable outbursts of feeling of the Slovak extremists and adventurers, a result of the failure of their own state, a failure which has provided a breeding ground for an anti-Semitism surpassing racial hatred in its brutality.

The present rulers of Slovakia recently sent Konstantin Culen to the United States for the purpose of explaining to the American Slovaks the present conditions in Slovakia, and of gaining their sympathy for the Slovak Government and its associates. Culen's mission proved a complete failure. The attitude of the American Slovaks towards Culen may be judged by a leading article in the *New Yorksky Denik*, the leading Slovak daily of America. The paper writes under the heading, 'Good-bye, Mr Culen': 'We believe that nobody will weep crocodile tears for Mr Konstantin Culen who came to teach us American Slovaks about Nazism. . . . That he completely failed is obvious from the fact that he did not persuade a single American Slovak to go to Slovakia to start any enterprise there. This shows that he is no organiser or that the people have no confidence in him. For such work we need men of different calibre who have a reputation as national workers and not as mischief makers. Therefore we say once more good-bye Mr Culen, and good riddance.'

Meanwhile conditions in Slovakia appear to be becoming more and more chaotic. In particular, there are frequent complaints that private correspondence is being tampered with. A recent letter from Bratislava states: 'The days of honesty have vanished and not even

the postal services have been spared. Letters are either withheld by the Secret Police or they are stolen by people who hope to find money in them. Now we know the meaning of dictatorship, for we Slovaks are not allowed to have our say in "liberated Slovakia". Our dictators carry out the orders of the Germans who are the real masters of the country. If there is any war with Poland, there will certainly be fighting in Slovakia. The fact that many letters disappear may well be due to the circumstance that the frontier areas are all full of German troops who censor letters to prevent any news about what is happening here from being sent abroad. We do not know when and how we shall find release from these dreadful conditions.'

An economic delegation was recently sent to Berlin to negotiate there on the economic position in Slovakia and particularly on the percentage of Czechoslovak gold which, in accordance with German promises, was to be allotted to Slovakia. The negotiations, however, which were to last several weeks, were rapidly concluded and the Slovak delegation returned empty-handed to Bratislava. The Germans did not give any of the promised gold to Slovakia, and the Slovak Government was faced with financial crisis as a result. The reason for this was that immediately after the declaration of Slovak 'independence' the Government introduced a Slovak currency which was to be covered by the share of the gold which Germany promised but did not give.

Furthermore, the negotiations for a trade and navigation treaty between Slovakia and Hungary which were to have started on June 26th, were postponed indefinitely. This

was the result of intervention on the part of Germany, who wishes to prevent Hungary from exporting industrial products to Slovakia. Germany's object is to monopolise for herself all the agricultural output of Slovakia, and for this Slovakia is expected to take German industrial products by way of barter. This arrangement, of course, made it impossible for Slovakia to obtain the foreign currency which she so badly needed, and her economic position deteriorated still more as a result.

A commercial agreement was recently signed at Bratislava between the Slovaks and the Germans by which Germany secures a dominant position in the economic life of Slovakia. The only advantage which the Slovaks derive from the agreement is that Slovak labourers who are sent to work in Germany will be allowed to send home their savings, if any.

With further reference to economic conditions in Slovakia it should be noted that the Slovak Government reached an agreement with Poland by which Slovak iron ore and other metallic ores were to be given in exchange for coal. This arrangement did not prove workable since Germany laid an embargo on all Slovak ores.

## *Chapter Twelve*

### CARPATHO-UKRAINE—BETWEEN TWO WORLDS

CARPATHO-RUSSIA IS A FORGOTTEN LAND. DURING THE first fifteen years of the Republic it enjoyed no great popularity although it was achieving wonders in reconstruction and cultural progress.

In the early months of 1939, Carpatho-Russia was engaged in heavy fighting with the Hungarian free corps. It had defended itself heroically against the invasion of its frontiers and its independence, and was bleeding to death as a result.

This nation obtained its independence only twenty years ago. Till then it had been scurvily treated by the culture and civilisation which was controlled by the Hungarian feudal magnates. But in 1919, in conjunction with the kindred Czechs and Slovaks, it began to develop apace. This strange country, which lies at the junction of two worlds, was recently restored to 'Upper Hungary'. Its leaders, who sat in the Prague Parliament, are to-day in the pay of the Hungarians and are seeking to obtain a modest living under the latter's domination. Yet these people must not be judged by their political leaders. It is said that every nation has the Press and politicians which it deserves, but Carpatho-Russia, which at the beginning of this year was re-christened Carpatho-Ukraine, deserved a better Government and also a better Press.

For close on twenty years the Opposition Deputies and Party leaders in Carpatho-Russia worked for the prosperity of the country. A poor people, with hardly

any culture, had achieved political independence, although it was really not ripe for it. The second Republic was, however, much too weak to withstand the assaults of the local politicians who were for the most part adventurers. In the capital of Chust, they had set out on a dangerous course. Polish-Czech relations had for years been uneasy. Poland had even recalled her Ambassador from Prague, and relations were only brought to a normal footing in 1938. That the Polish government regarded Prague as important is to be seen from the fact that it appointed the Polish commissar in Danzig, Papée, an excellent diplomatist, as Ambassador in Prague.

In Carpatho-Russia, however, the 'Ukrainians' had seized power. For years there were squabbles amongst the population. A large number were Little-Russians, and the government had supported these, especially on the language question. But the future Prime Minister, Augustin Volosin, and his friends supported the Ukrainians. Poland had never regarded these cultural aspirations with sympathy, for it had its own Ukrainians on the borders of Carpatho-Russia, who had obstinately resisted all attempts to be Polonised. No one will deny that the Ukrainians have the right to live their own lives. The Soviet Russians, indeed, have granted them full cultural autonomy, as they have to all their minorities. Germany, on the other hand, which had once in 1917 surveyed the corn-fields of White-Ukraine, would have given a piece of its National Socialist soul for a partition of the fertile

White-Ukraine. When relations between Poland and Germany became strained in the spring, the latter supported Ukrainian aspirations in Carpatho-Ukraine. The intention was to make Carpatho-Ukraine part of a general Ukrainian question, and anti-Semitism was the first weapon employed.

Carpatho-Ukraine was never Ukrainian, although it might be claimed to be so from the vernacular which the population there have been speaking for centuries and which they have preserved despite Hungarian attempts at assimilation. After the war many Russians, especially Ukrainian immigrants, who had settled in Czechoslovakia, were given Czech citizenship by the Czechs and were employed in the civil service. Many of the Ukrainians have abused this hospitality by forming a Ukrainian political Party, and it was chiefly immigrants who began the Ukrainian movement in the newly formed independent state. No one would have objected to these claims for cultural freedom if they had not also been combined with efforts to seize political power. In the course of my many conversations with Volosin, I pointed out to him the disastrous results that might ensue from this for the Czechs and Ukrainians, on account of the Polish attitude. Volosin denied any intention of trying to form a Greater Ukrainian state, but his colleagues had openly demanded it. The Carpatho-Russian government, whose Press Chief Dr Komarinsky was recently a guest of the German Government in Berlin, had never denied its sympathy with the Third Reich. Berlin had given encouragement to the Carpatho-Ukrainians, who had



immediately changed the name of their state to Carpatho-Russia, and had thereby caused certain difficulties for the Poles. Yet in Berlin it had only been desired to exercise pressure in view of the imminent visit to Warsaw of Ribbentrop. On this occasion Germany gave an assurance that she would do nothing to assist the Greater Ukrainian movement. The Government in Chust was disappointed, like all friends and allies of Germany. In the meantime the Ukrainians obtained funds from North and South America, where Ukrainians had settled, and Volosin proudly told me that with these funds and a generous loan from the Czech Central Government, he was going to promote civilisation in the country. The Ukrainians did, indeed, work with West-European speed; they introduced order into the streets and telephone-system, for these had become chaotic owing to the territorial concessions to Hungary. They established their small, poor state on an economic basis. They formed the *Sic* youth-bands on the German military pattern, and these were the backbone of the Ukrainians in their heroic struggles.

In December, 1938, I stayed in Carpatho-Ukraine for several weeks, in order to study the new situation. As a long-standing friend of Carpatho-Russia, I had a great love for the people and the soil, despite the fact that its leaders to-day have quite different political conceptions. At that time I pointed out to Volosin, who entertained many misconceptions, that the Czechs were indeed in sympathy with their Ukrainian brethren and for twenty years had invested large sums in the country, yet they

were in no condition to-day to make large financial contributions to Carpatho-Ukraine, especially as the state forests, the largest source of wealth in the country, had passed into the ownership of the new independent state. It would therefore be more sensible, I informed him, to obtain a foreign loan from the countries who imported the timber. Volosin, delighted at the suggestion, requested me to talk to his financial-minister, Julian Révay, a former Social Democrat, who had, however, banned this Party in the country. I was ready to find a group of men prepared to make a loan to the Government. When I received instructions from Volosin to begin negotiations, I had already found a foreign group which was prepared to lend the Government 500 million crowns on the security of the revenues of the state forests and certain concessions in exploiting them. Volosin requested that the group should erect new saw-mills and lay down industrial railways, to which the group agreed. The negotiations were almost concluded, and Révay was supposed to have direct conversations with the leaders of the financial group to clear up points, when he fell ill. In the meantime a financial genius in the person of Capt. von Lustig, a former friend of Marshal Göring, and the largest arms contractor for China, also one of the bitterest enemies of the National Socialists—he lives in London—appeared on the scene. And fate had it that his group and mine became competitors. Hugo von Lustig, who was staying in Prague, and had connections with Foreign Minister Chvalkovsky, wanted naturally

to oust me and therefore offered the Government a loan twice the size of ours. He demanded political concessions in the solution of the Jewish problem; wanted with the assistance of his French and Rumanian friends, to build a railway connection with Rumania and Bessarabia, combining the whole transaction with the transfer of Jewish capital in Czechoslovakia. He made a similar suggestion to the Slovak and Czech Governments. Lustig tried to get me to collaborate with him. His plan was undoubtedly generous, but it had no firm financial foundation, for Lustig wanted first to raise a loan from the English and French Jews, so as to make some progress in the solution of the Jewish question. My financial group was ready to place a sum of several millions at the immediate disposal of Révay, who, at my suggestion, intended to spend it on the '*Sic*'. Révay rejected this, however, in favour of Lustig's offer.

Lustig, however, was unable to put his plan into operation. He did not succeed in getting the agreement, which I saw in a French draft, signed; for Volosin refused to break the promise he had made to me and be drawn into a political adventure. He had a healthy instinct for such things. Further, there occurred just at this time friction with the Central Government in Prague, which wanted to have a nominee in the Government at Chust and had appointed General Prchala to be Minister for Defence and the Interior. This appointment was ignored in Chust, and the new Minister waited vainly for the assignment of his duties. But even apart from this, the

Central Government, which had learned of the generous transaction, would have vetoed it. The Central Government took the view that this question could not be solved without its collaboration, and it was requested to wait until an agreement with Chust had been made. Despite the excuses later put forward by Révay, however, my friends and I had lost all inclination for the business and we left the Carpatho-Ukrainians to their own Government, which exercised an unexampled terrorism in the approaching elections, and which increasingly fell under the sway of Berlin. Révay even went to Berlin to undertake economic negotiations, although I had previously told him that his efforts would be useless, since Berlin already obtained timber from Austria and was, besides, obliged to take timber from Slovakia for political reasons. Germany, I told him, could not pay with foreign currency, and foreign currency was necessary for the country's reconstruction. The Central Government was also of the opinion that this transaction, since it concerned a deal in foreign currency on a large scale, could not be carried through without the collaboration and participation of the National Bank. Révay returned unsuccessful from Berlin and was deprived of office.

A less savoury role was played by the first premier, Brody, who was likewise deprived of office by the Central Government and later sentenced to several months imprisonment for treason. Brody was a deputy of the rapidly growing Kurtyák (Ruthenian) Party, for many years in the Prague Parliament. He had never been able

to acquire much influence and did not even enjoy the sympathy of circles at home.

The Carpatho-Ukrainians, like the Slovaks, exploited the internal political crisis of the Czechs in September, and succeeded in obtaining fulfilment of their long-standing demands for autonomy. Nevertheless, the Czechs, who had hitherto maintained a centralised system in Uzhorod, had administered the land well. My friend Konstantin Hrabar, the former chief mayor, had been appointed governor, and carried out his duties until shortly after the September crisis. As the second highest official in the Republic he enjoyed much sympathy and esteem. Hrabar, who was a priest, was very akin in feeling to the Czechs and therefore enjoyed the confidence of the President of the Republic, and indeed of the whole Government, which had to appoint another governor in his place as a result of the political reconstruction after September. The new governor had to form the first Carpatho-Ukrainian Government, whose task it was to conduct the frontier negotiations with the participation of Dr Bacinsky, at the Delimitation Commission in Vienna.

After the removal of Brody from the Premiership he was replaced by Volosin. By this the Central Government believed that it had placed the cause of the Ukrainians in the best hands. Bilej, a former deaf-and-dumb teacher, was appointed Police President of Chust. Bilej, who had received me as a guest in Chust, had later conducted the heroic defence against the Hungarians on one flank, whilst on the other it was conducted by Révay's successor,

Klotshurak, who was Volosin's secretary and afterwards Minister. Révay's brother, who was leader of the Ukrainian Party, was shot in the struggle. And this brings us to one of the saddest chapters in the history of a year by no means lacking in surprises. A few days before the heavy fighting, Minister Klotshurak had dined with me and had outlined his views, which favoured an unyielding preservation of Carpatho-Ukrainian independence, and which were published by the Government in a Press communiqué of March 13th, 1939. The struggles in the Carpatho-Ukraine had, however, begun months before this. They consisted of attacks by Hungarian irregulars who were beaten back. Then there was also fighting between Hungarian and Czech troops in which howitzers were employed. A commission was at once set up which settled the matter peacefully. The Hungarians had wanted to fight, so as to cause difficulties for the Carpatho-Ukrainians and for the Central Government. They had hoped to call in the Axis powers as arbitrators. Berlin, however, finally became tired of intervening and, as in a previous dispute of the Ukrainians with the Prague Government concerning General Prchala, employed the classic expression used by Augustus of Saxony at his abdication, 'Do your own dirty work!' The Ukrainians and Slovaks were none the less spurred on by the Wilhelmstrasse in their internal squabbles. Just as in the artificially fostered conflict between the Czechs and Slovaks in March 1939, the Wilhelmstrasse advised the Czechs to answer with military force, but only so that Berlin could afterwards

make the decision and enable the Slovaks to break away completely from the Czechs. The Janus-head showed itself clearly three days later, on March 15th, when Chvalkovsky knew definitely whither the 'friendly German relations' were leading. But then it was too late.

Whilst the Germans marched into Bohemia-Moravia and thence to Slovakia, violent struggles were going on in Chust and the surrounding district. The Hungarians had concentrated their troops and the struggle was being conducted by the general staff against a handful of Ukrainian and Russian heroes, who fought desperately without any assistance. These struggles, which ended in the occupation of the little Carpatho-Russian country, lasted for weeks. The Hungarians did not want to let slip this favourable opportunity of regaining their former territory, for such an opportunity might never occur again. They threw all their forces into the struggle, as did also the Ukrainians. The latter fought tenaciously to preserve their independence and to be free from the Hungarian kingdom to which they had once belonged for close on a thousand years.

The present Hungarian Government is not very much in favour of Democratic principles; it has only just introduced the secret ballot, a reform which had been demanded for years, but it promised the Ukrainians a measure of cultural autonomy if they would submit. The Ukrainians had reckoned on German assistance, but Germany was too busy with the new Protectorate, where it was encountering unexpected difficulties. Germany

need only have delivered a vigorous warning to the Hungarians to have prevented them from marching into Carpatho-Ukraine. But she kept silent. It is clear, it has indeed been definitely proved, that this occurred with the full knowledge and consent of the Wilhelmstrasse. Hungary to-day fears to fall out with the Wilhelmstrasse, and kept quiet, just as did Mussolini when Hitler invaded Austria. Hitler's words of thanks on this occasion were: 'Mussolini, I and the German nation will never forget this.' Hitler wanted to satisfy the Hungarians, who had always insisted on a revision of the frontiers and had viewed his own Slovak plans with distrust, so that in his occupation of Slovakia he would have a free hand to deal with Poland. He was also against the common Polish-Hungarian frontier, but he was unable to oppose the wishes of Count Ciano, who favoured a better understanding with Poland. In the rivalry between the Axis Powers, which has been clearly brought out in the Polish question, Carpatho-Russia whose frontiers Germany had guaranteed, perished.

The new Hungarian masters have imposed a stern control in the reconquered territories—in Slovakia as well as in Carpatho-Ukraine—a control whose strong anti-Semitic tendency is in harmony with the present Hungarian internal policy; for the Jews were one of the strongest pillars of Democracy. In the last twenty years they had full opportunities for development, which they enjoyed in Hungary only until the revolution of 1918. There is therefore a saying current in the 'Upper Hungarian' territories that when a man dies, his grave-



stone bears the inscription: 'He died in his eightieth year and lived twenty years'. This is characteristic, for the Hungarians themselves say: 'What Benes was unable to achieve in twenty years, Horthy has done in twenty days. He has made the Czechs beloved.' For to-day all members of Opposition Parties and dissatisfied minorities realise that they really did enjoy free possibilities of life and development in the framework of the Czech Republic, which was no better and no worse than any other liberal, Democratic republic.

Present-day Hungary is completely under the sway of Germany, even if it does spare no effort to preserve its independence. There have been struggles enough between the Hungarians and Germans, not against the Reich, but against the Germanism which the Hapsburgs tried to spread. There is a Hungarian saying: 'The German is a rogue'. Hungary will soon cease to be 'Rump-Hungary', but who will guarantee that this talented and good-natured people will not one day form again a part of the German 'living-space'?

Czechoslovakia, the heart of Europe, with all its cultural and economic achievements, is territorially lost to us. But the truly Democratic belief of its native population still stands. Perhaps this heart will one day again resuscitate the body of Europe. The Carpatho-Russian people have paid for their twenty years' development with their blood. It is to be hoped that the Hungarians, who have ever been inspired by chivalry, will esteem this sacrifice of blood and will not deny to an

honourable people, which has been neglected for a thousand years, that which is holy to every Hungarian: the free acknowledgement of his race, his language and his belief.

## *Chapter Thirteen*

### DRANG NACH OSTEN

IT WAS NOT SO LONG AGO THAT THE GERMAN PRESS WAS put out of temper when mention was made of the German 'Drang nach Osten', although Hitler himself had announced his intention of fulfilling this aspiration. The whole of Hitler's political conception is really nothing but a repetition of history. History is always repeating itself, but in different forms. Whether it be Peter the Mad, Napoleon or Adolphus, the hermit of Obersalzberg, it makes no difference. Heroes and scenes change, but the circle always completes its course.

It is to-day no longer a secret that the German military preparations which preceded the invasion of March, were really intended for the Eastern frontier. The main troop movements occurred in Upper Silesia. Here fortifications were erected, especially in the line from Gleiwitz to Ratibor, and thence to Tarnowitz. The frontier guards consisted exclusively of SS. and SA. men; further, the work of fortification was continued from Pietschen to beyond Guttentag-Rosenberg. In the latter region no less than 30,000 men were said to have been stationed; barracks were being hastily built for them, and air-raid precaution exercises were being carried out everywhere. As far as I know, in this blossom-period of German-Polish friendship, Poland displayed no war-like intention against Germany. On the Donnersmackhütte near Hindenburg, on the Georgschacht Biskupitz and the Delberbrückschächte-Hinderburg, outposts were erected. In Bavaria fortification was similarly going on,

but most activity in this respect was in East Prussia, especially in the direction of Marienwerder, Riesenburg, Deutsch-Iglau, Osterode, Gildenburg and Ortelsburg. Here thousands of labourers from Danzig were set to work. From this it was clear what Germany's intentions in the East were.

The end of June 1939 betrayed completely Germany's designs in the Danzig question. Yet activity was also going on on the Western frontier—and by no means least in the Rhineland.

The military movements in the Protectorate were just as interesting as was the entry into Austria. Glaring mistakes occurred during the occupation of Czechoslovakia, which cast much doubt upon the fighting powers of the German army.

When the German troops entered the streets of Prague, the German Press-photographers accompanying the army took pictures of the smiling, flower-garlanded soldiers. They were the only ones allowed to do so. I was able to observe the troops closely and I happened to be standing with a military attaché of a foreign embassy, and an outstanding military expert, who later analysed for me the composition of the troops. His statement was roughly to this effect: a third of the soldiers were active front-line troops, a third reservists, who had only had a short training, and a third were older men who had been soldiers in the World War. From the military point of view, only the first group was of any use; the second was insufficiently trained, whilst the last were for the most part useless. A Sudeten-German soldier told us afterwards:

'In my battalion men were placed who had been in the heavy artillery during the war and who had not the least notion of how to work a machine-gun, model 1934; even the older soldiers who had been trained for machine-guns in the war, did not know how to use it.'

The bad assignment of men in a fortification in a Bohemian town was typical. Of the privates, only some twenty or twenty-five were trained. The rest consisted of soldiers who had fought in the last war, or who had seen no service at all. These defects were clearly revealed during the march into Czechoslovakia, and we were able to obtain a clear picture of the conditions prevailing. The infantry had been brought in lorries from North Germany to the frontier of Zone Five, from which the advance was supposed to continue on foot. By the evening of the first day a quarter of the troops were incapable of marching further. On the third evening, when their objective was reached, only half were able to march; the rest had to be brought along in lorries.

These reports may be thought exaggerated or biased, but they come from a military expert who bases them on information from the German army.

Not only were the men of poor quality and training, but the weapons too, especially the new machine-guns, left much to be desired. This is obviously due to the fact that production has been so speeded up that the quality has had to suffer. The weapons are bad and not properly tested. A high German official complained that many of the new arms have simply not been perfected for lack of time. Thus, to cite an example, the new machine-gun,

model 1934, already mentioned, is still in an unfinished state as far as testing is concerned. The gun in itself is well constructed, but the material is faulty. The machine-guns are already beginning to show signs of wear. They tend to jam.

Similar defects were also revealed in the new battleship *Tirpitz* and also in the engines of the *Scharnhorst*. During a test cruise in the middle of March 1939, salt water got into the engines. Attempts were made to profit by these experiences in the building of the sister-ship, *Gneisenau*, but without much result. For the material is poor and sabotage is carried on in the ship-yards. The harbour locks are also faulty; the *Tirpitz*, for instance, could not leave Wilhelmshaven as the locks were too small. The Germans claim that the 26,000 ton battleship, *Scharnhorst*, is to stay in Wilhelmshaven for strategic reasons, but this is not possible until the new dock is ready, which will scarcely be before 1940. These defects in the new ships explain why the agents of the naval intelligence department, in common with the Gestapo, are eager to discover the technical secrets of British and American battleships. It is only necessary to call to mind here the great spy trial in the United States where the Gestapo spirited away the important witnesses.

Lack of new material hinders the reliability of construction in the German battleships. In a report which reached the German Social Democratic Party in Paris from Germany, it was stated that even the former German superiority in optical work exists no longer. Thus naval circles are extraordinarily interested as to the where-

abouts of the concealed range-finders in the new English ships. The German range-finders are large and visible, being placed on the bridge. For some time experiments have been made in Germany with electrical range-finders, but without results of any practical value. Whoever has the opportunity of speaking not only to technical, but also to military experts, cannot escape the impression that each group of experts has a very pessimistic opinion of the armaments with which it is concerned, hoping that the defects of their own particular department will be compensated by the merits of the others. Army psychologists are sceptical of the spirit of the troops, but usually console themselves with the thought that the quality of the arms is good. Naval engineers, on various occasions, have expressed their doubts as to the quality of naval equipment, thereby acknowledging the superiority of that of England and other countries, and have usually concluded by saying that the poorness of quality of their arms will be more than made up by the excellent morale of the troops.

It is not my intention to enter into a disquisition on military science, but this last statement compels me to deny from my own experience, that the morale of the German troops is excellent. A member of the Czech general staff declared to me that when he considers the nature of the German troops and their military spirit, he can only cry in despair: 'Why didn't we fight in September?' It is precisely the morale of the German troops which is in a process of disintegration, for there is no inner discipline. The men know quite well that

they, as has been usual in Prussia for decades, have to obey, yet the wide-spread news-service and the drumming of the Propaganda Ministry, to which the Press Department of the army is subject, cannot prevent soldiers from expressing their thoughts on politics to their relatives. One needs only to read a soldier's letter, such as I had occasion to, in order to learn that the whole army is politically undermined.

It is indeed reported from Kutna Hora in Bohemia that a German infantry regiment stationed there received orders to proceed Eastwards. Through a misunderstanding the German troops thought that war had already broken out and revolted. Order had to be restored by a contingent of the Gestapo who made wholesale arrests.

Serious trouble also arose among the German troops quartered at Vyskov in Moravia ; seven German officers came to a mysterious end there and their bodies were transported to Brno secretly. Investigations proved that these officers were murdered by their own men, and the German troops were not thereafter allowed in the streets after 9 p.m.

In the Weimar Republic the Government has wanted to remove politically unreliable elements from the army, but was late in removing those officers who had preached its destruction. To-day the Reichswehr knows that it is a powerful political instrument in the hands of the Government, and behaves accordingly. The concessions that are made to them are also due to this, for it is one of the main foundations of the present regime. And every soldier knows it.



If things should ever become too critical for the Reichswehr then it will just remove the man whom it has helped into the saddle. Hitler, the supreme commander of the armed forces, is dependent upon them. Yet these defects in the Reichswehr, which I have sketched in broad outline, have not prevented that orientation in foreign policy, in which the 'Drang nach Osten' is the Achilles heel.

It was in Slovakia that I had the best opportunity of carrying out my observations. Formerly, during my sojourn in Prague as foreign correspondent, I was in the habit of making week-end trips to the Slovakian capital of Bratislava, a journey of seven hours. After March 14th, I was no longer able to do this, for the frontiers were closed. The news that came from Bratislava was very scanty, and I could not apply for a visa. My intention to travel there would at once have been given political significance, a thing that was by no means desirable in those critical days. The Slovak Government, whose members were old enemies of mine, might easily have packed me off to a concentration camp. So I travelled to Slovakia in the uniform and with the papers of a Slovak soldier. This was fairly easy to manage, as all the Slovak soldiers were being demobilised and sent home. We reached the Slovak frontier without incident, and were greeted with enthusiastic cries by the Hlinka guard, those legalised bandits, who robbed railway passengers of their cash. From Bratislava, armed with my birth-certificate—according to which I had been born there—I was able to make a journey of inspection through Slovakia, the results of which appear in the following chapter.

Just at this time the German troops were advancing, and I had reached Zilina. By doing this they had prevented the Hungarians and the Poles from forming a common frontier. But they were not able to penetrate into Carpatho-Ukraine. The Hungarians had recovered their former territories after conquering resistance on the part of the local population. There was also vigorous fighting between Slovaks and Hungarians on the Eastern frontier. Then a Slovak commission travelled to Budapest, where the new frontiers were confirmed and the fighting ended.

Since there had been heavy fighting in the Eastern extremity of Slovakia behind Spisska Nova Ves, the German troops had not dared to advance. They kept clear of all theatres of war. As they had confiscated the munitions of the Slovaks, the latter were in no position to defend themselves properly. There were also many arrests, for the Hlinka guard had opposed the German army. Numbers of wounded German soldiers were taken to the hospitals; whenever transport made it possible, they were usually taken back to Bohemia. In Prague, a few wounded German Slovaks lay in the 'Bulovka' hospital, although there was no fighting in Bohemia and Moravia. But there was some friction in Slovakia and on the Polish border.

The Hungarians had not dared to attack the German troops. When the first *regular* Hungarian troops invaded Carpatho-Ukraine, the *Czechoslovak* army had opposed them. There was some fighting, but General Prchala immediately declared, very diplomatically, that as a result of the occupation of Bohemia and Moravia, he placed his

forces at the disposal of the Germans and that they were now a part of the German army. The Hungarians then no longer dared to attack them. The result was that the troops stationed there had the opportunity of escaping to Rumania or Poland. Prchala eventually fled from Slovakia to Poland, where he began to form the new Czech legion. He had many friends and sympathisers in Slovakia, and could therefore move about freely, but he seized the very first opportunity to make his escape to Poland.

The German troops, therefore, did not penetrate into Carpatho-Ukraine, because they did not want to intervene in the skirmishes between the Hungarians and the Ukrainians who were fighting courageously for their freedom. The German troops took up quarters at Zilina and advanced no further, for beyond there shooting was going on. I remember that in Berlin, during the Spartacist rising, placards were posted in the streets around the Government buildings, saying: 'Caution! Heavy shooting going on!' This is undoubtedly evidence of German thoroughness, but in Slovakia it was disappointing. Zilina is from a military point of view an important strategic point. It is a charming provincial town with very good billeting possibilities for troops, since the Czechoslovak army had built excellent barracks in Rosenberg, which is scarcely more than an hour's train-journey distant. The High Tatra mountains, which are half Polish, lie quite close and offer wonderful opportunities for recreation for the German officers. A mountainous district and of extreme strategical importance.

But still more important were the High Carpathians, where severe fighting with the Russians had took place in the last war. In Zborov, for instance, the Czechs had displayed extraordinary heroism. Much blood had been shed there when the Carpathians had held up the Russian march to Hungary.

But the Germans did not dare to proceed, for they were too close to the Poles, and they wished to avoid difficulties. Slovakia was to serve as a centre for German military operations, and at the same time as a wedge between Germany's neighbours. The Germans had counted upon meeting with armed resistance everywhere, but this was not the case; the population both in the Protectorate and in the new independent Slovakia could not oppose the superior forces of the Germans.

The Southern Slovak frontier is an artificial one. It is mostly flat country, with the exception of the Tatra mountains, and only a few fortifications have been built there. The frontier is formed by the Danube and the strategically important island of Schütt, which immediately returned to Hungary in September, on account of its purely Hungarian population. Here, then, the German advance into Hungary can proceed at any time without encountering overmuch resistance. The late Hungarian Premier, Julius Gömbös, complained to me in 1933 that the Czechoslovak monitors could easily bombard the Hungarian capital, and that he was therefore demanding the return of the island of Schütt. In 1933 the Czechoslovak Government had no more territorial claims on Hungary, nor any desire to attack it. Hungary

was free at any time to join the Little Entente. Yet the Hungarians only succeeded in ruffling the tempers of the Czechs by their demands for revision. Now the new state of affairs permits the German troops an unimpeded passage into Hungary. The Hungarian troops, even though they are inspired by a wonderful fighting spirit and have proved their mettle in war, could not resist the German advance for very long.

Germany wants a free passage through the Hungarian plain to Transylvania in Rumania. This district, which belonged to Hungary up till 1918, is well known to the Germans from the World War. Only the Transylvanian Alps and the road by Predeal could offer serious obstacles to the Germans. Rumania has an army which is inferior to no other in military spirit. Therefore Germany is trying to conquer the Rumanian stores of raw-materials by 'Peaceful methods.' The dream of reaching the Black Sea will of course never be realised, for the Turks as well as the Russians control these waters and the former have made a firm political pact with England.

The Germans were able to overawe the defeated states only by the numbers of their army, but they will not do it again. For if one considers the German troops to-day, even a child can tell the condition of the German army and its fighting qualities.

No one knows how the present war will end. I have heard many Englishmen speak very sceptically of their chances of victory. In reply to these, I should like to state that, from my own observations and conversations with military authorities, the fighting powers of the

German army are a fable, just as is the whole nimbus of the National Socialist movement. The National Socialist movement has, it is true, achieved successes in Germany. Yet these successes, which have been accompanied by failures in other directions and brought Germany in opposition to the world, do not suffice to make the present regime the only blessing from which the German people can expect salvation. One can be a warm friend of German cultural values without necessarily accepting the 'Machtpolitik' of National Socialism.

## *Chapter Fourteen*

### THE GERMAN ADVANCE INTO SLOVAKIA

IT WAS LONG AGO APPARENT THAT THE GERMAN OPERATIONS in Slovakia gave promise of military complications in the eastern corner of Europe. During the last few months numerous conjectures concerning Hitler's alleged war plans were mooted, the majority of them based on the scanty results of doubtful reports from occupied territories. On the German side, of course, these plans were still denied, and every step was taken to prevent the circulation of these rumours.

In Bratislava (Pressburg), the Slovakian capital, great activity was shown. After March 15th, large movements of German troops were carried out, and the country itself was hermetically sealed, so that in some respects it forms a Tibetan cloister town like Lhasa, where strangers are seldom allowed to enter. Whilst the Propaganda Minister, Sano Mach, often dined with the British Consul and sought to gain his support for Slovakian affairs, the Slovakian Government took every measure for the maintenance of power in the country. It proved its power by special decrees covering the aggravation of the position of the Jews, thus showing how it would do justice to Slovakian wishes in every respect. Actually, however, the Reichswehr, the military authorities, who were more humane and more reasonable than the civil authorities in Bohemia-Moravia, dominated the situation. They were more cautious and wiser, sought to reach an understanding with the population and had actually reached a working relationship with the local authorities. But actually they

controlled the whole of Slovakia and had their military outposts everywhere, particularly along the frontier. When the Slovaks wished to defend themselves against the Hungarian invasion, they asked the German authorities for arms, since these had been confiscated from them, but, naturally, their request was refused, so that their resistance was extremely feeble. Nevertheless, many hundreds of fighters lost their lives rather than simply surrender to the Hungarians. Hitler, who had taken over the protection and defence of the Slovakian territory, did not desire to prevent the Hungarians from obtaining new territory and had at the same time communicated by diplomatic channels a decisive veto that the Hungarians should not regain all their former territories in Slovakia, since he had no use for a strong Hungary.

In this connection, the comments of an eminent general of the Reichswehr are not without interest. If I do not now mention his name, this is merely because I do not wish to expose him to the revenge of his rivals of the military caste. He said :

‘ It would be foolish to maintain that the Reichswehr has completely subordinated itself to Hitler, as it is by no means in agreement with his actions. When we were to move into Bohemia, we were told that we must move in with the greatest speed possible, as our German comrades in Prague were being maltreated by the Czechs, and a full-blooded revolution had broken out. We had been asked by the Czech Government to enter the country so as to restore law and order. On the next day, a seething town awaited us



in which order was still maintained, and we learnt then how we had been deceived. We had no desire to fight or conquer foreign territory. We knew well enough what a burden Austria already meant for us. The bad weather conditions, the drifting snow and the biting wind on March 15th and the following days had made enormous demands on our men and motorised columns. Our motorised units stuck fast on many occasions. The large stocks of raw materials and, above all, the nature of the armaments of the Czech army had opened up new resources for us, and we recognised the invasion to be a necessary and unavoidable measure to add to our exhausted stocks of raw materials. We had seen how excellently the Czech army was equipped and we had seen their trenches and barracks and I must confess openly that we were glad that we did not have to fight this army. During the September crisis, we only waited for some one to declare war so that we could set up a military government in the resulting chaotic conditions and thus finally take over power. An open revolt against the present régime would be purposeless, since just this had done most to form a German army and place it in power. Certainly this was the reason for the presence of many friends of the Nazis in our ranks, as they no doubt knew how to honour military qualities. If the Social Democrats in the Weimar Republic had grasped the importance of the army rightly, they would still be standing to-day at the side of the working class, but the class differences were too great and the army—at least the officers—belonged to the middle classes. But let us not talk of that; many sins have been committed, and even to-day, this is still true.

‘You ask me why we penetrated into Slovakia although Slovakia intends to have its own independent existence. We soldiers have to obey orders, but this by no means implies that we, the officers, have forgotten how to think. It was already clear to us on May 26th that HE could not penetrate into Poland, since the Poles had replied with a full mobilisation of their armed forces. But the *Drang nach Osten* (Drive to the East) is not merely a political slogan. It expresses our vital interests. We have to get to the Rumanian oilfields, to the resources of raw materials and, if possible, to include Hungary in the conception of the Greater German *Lebensraum* (living-space). We know that we will have greater difficulties in subduing the Hungarians than we had with the Czechs, but we approve HIS wish when we agree to his military operations which we naturally carry out. In Slovakia, we had very little to gain, but our experiences during the Great War in Rumania have taught us what treasures we could obtain there. The Rumanian army would doubtless face us, but we have no intention of being entangled in any military operations. This the Reichswehr would never allow. In Slovakia we have succeeded in subduing the population, and from there we will later direct our military operations against the Poles and against their armament industries. We will thus cut off Poland from the west and south and encircle it economically. We can keep up the economic encirclement of Poland, as otherwise there would be a very hard fight. If Anglo-French capital further shows a reserved attitude towards Poland (and a loan, I feel sure, will not help Poland to stand on her

feet) this will be of assistance to us. The war psychosis, which has been created by large movements of troops, is assisting us to achieve our end. The big British financiers will be very careful not to carry out large investments in these war-threatened countries. Poland will have to make us political concessions in order to maintain its outlet to the sea and the war mentality will have to give way to economic pressure which we will exert.

‘We will take the Polish Corridor and compensate Poland with economic concessions, and they will be glad to maintain their national existence in security. Slovakia itself will one day be incorporated in Hungary and a Protectorate will be made out of Hungary, in which the Hungarians will maintain their linguistic autonomy. The Magyars will have no other choice. Italy will have to fall into line, as a military conflict between the two Axis powers cannot be contemplated by Italy although I can tell you quite frankly that one day there will be a war between Italy and ourselves, although this may sound very absurd just now.

‘We would not have agreed to the Spanish adventure, but, on the other hand, we saw a very good opportunity for the military training of our youth. Our losses were larger than we anticipated. On the whole, however, we gained considerable military experience and obtained a valuable insight into the strength of Soviet Russian armaments. This lesson will be valuable to us in a later military conflict. I do not hesitate to believe that eventually it will come to a war. The only question to be decided is when and where this will take place. This, however, will be decided during

further political deliberations as the battle can no longer be won around the conference table. The new distribution of territory in Europe will no longer be carried out by a peace conference, but will be hardly contested, step by step. In this sense all our preparations are being made, and we hope that we will be successful in avoiding war in the near future. Meanwhile, the secure foundations of the present régime in Germany are more and more being undermined, and the inner political upheaval will be thus the more bloody. The army will therefore play a decisive role. If to-day there are dreams held abroad of an inner revolution in Germany, I feel that I must definitely declare that it is far too soon. We need more time and more suffering than the others to learn our lesson. Spain was a step, a stage in development, which was followed by others. Only when we encounter the first military opposition in the Balkans will there be a fundamental change. But I fear that something might start in the west before then. I do not believe that the Western Powers would be able to stop our further operations in the east. They will endeavour to fight us economically, but as long as our hands are not tied in the east, we will be able to stand the blockade.

‘The ore deposits in Slovakia are far too small. It is only the agricultural products which really mean an important step forward in the direction of our self-sufficiency. Slovakia means a strategical outpost for us—nothing more and nothing less. From there we can march into the unfortified plains of Hungary at any time and we can push forward right to the South Slavonic frontiers. Here, of course, we will come up

against the Italian sphere of interest, and Italy will no longer stand as an idle spectator. Contrary to our original intentions, we have therefore not brought up the Croat question. It was mentioned during the discussions with the Prince Regent Paul in Berlin, but his far-reaching assurances were quite satisfactory, the more so since we knew Rome's attitude upon the question well. If, however, Jugoslavia goes to the aid of her threatened neighbour Rumania, there will be a considerable danger of an Italo-German conflict.

'We do not care much for politics, but merely act in accordance with HIS wishes. It may not be unknown to you that already in Godesburg and Munich we had a different attitude to HIM. We will always act with HIM, provided that we find that the Reichswehr will be strengthened and fortified by its action, but under no conditions will we submit to all HIS power-political demands. As soon as it does not suit us any more, we will not play HIS game. Abroad, one likes to say that the discipline of the Reichswehr is already undermined. There might be some truth in this, but it is not sufficiently strong to make a change overnight possible. The political week-end is very rich in surprises, but HE is always sure of the agreement of the Reichswehr in advance, as otherwise he would not dare to act. One must not under any conditions confuse the Reichswehr with all the political initiative of the Reich government, since the Reichswehr is the firm protector of peace, which Germany must give to the world, if she herself is to live and prosper in peace.'

These statements correspond to the shorthand report of the general's declaration and have, of course, been translated. They show clearly the thoughts of these circles. It must be said that they by no means represent a minority. For the explanation of the development of Protectorate countries, these statements no doubt supply a valuable contribution which under no conditions can be ignored.

## *Chapter Fifteen*

### CZECHS AGAINST GERMANS

WHAT WERE THE RELATIONS BETWEEN THE CZECHS AND the Germans before the outbreak of war ?

On June 5th, the Secretary of State of the Protectorate, Karl Hermann Frank, at Budweiss (formerly Ceske Budjovice) made a threatening speech against the Czech people. Budweiss has always been a hotly-contested district between the Czechs and the Germans, and they had purposely picked upon this place, since a small clique of National Socialists sought to Germanise the town, which was Czech. The Germans had themselves always written and spoken of it as Böhmisches-Budweiss (Bohemian Budweiss). The punitive measures, which had been enforced against Kladno—which had a Czech working class majority—for the murder of a German policeman, throw a revealing light upon present conditions in the Protectorate. They prove that the Czechs had not been intimidated in any way by the Gestapo and that they were continuing their underground fight for freedom.

The people are continuing their fight. The Czech organisations abroad are working on, supplying the Press with news, conferring with statesmen and eagerly following the latest news from the battle-fronts.

The Czechs were only waiting for the war. They had never attacked, but were always on the defensive. And, when, in September, the Germans began to march in, as a consequence of the Munich Agreement, they met with no resistance. The army, in fact the whole people, showed the decisive and disciplined bearing which did not allow

a single scuffle. They have been accused of cowardice, but in no case was that true. The Czech people had attained such an ethically high and morally disciplined viewpoint that this alone holds out great hopes for them. When, in the future, we talk of the Czech people, we must make a distinction between the Slovakian struggles for independence (which were sponsored only by the Party of the late Father Hlinka) and the Czech national struggles, which will unite again the Slavic brothers in the state of to-morrow. An example of this is the fact that, for example, the Paris ambassador, Dr Stefan Osusky, a Slovak, remains, as before, at the head of the Paris Czech foreign organisation. One still speaks of a Czechoslovakian state, with the sole difference that one has drawn a line between the Czechs and the Slovaks. This solution of the Sirovy Government is contrary to the feeling of the whole population.

In the Czech foreign circles of emigrants, the conviction prevails that the third and final Republic will be constituted. The Czech people hold great hopes that the advance fighters among the emigrants will continue their struggles. The puppet Government, naturally, has had to explain its attitude. For example, in a Reuter report of July 25th, 1939, we read :

‘It is stated that former Czech officials living abroad are to be virtually outlawed by being deprived of their citizenship and their personal fortunes, which will be confiscated in favour of the State under a law to be passed by the Czech government. . . . Dr Georg Havelka,



Acting Prime Minister of Bohemia and Moravia stated to-day :

“ Czech politicians now living abroad are pretending to speak on behalf of the Czech people. I declare emphatically that they are acting without our consent and without being in agreement with us.

“ We are not going to enter into a controversy on this subject. We are going to act. Within a few days we are passing stringent legal measures which will deal with those who, by their acts, are alienating themselves from the nation.

“ The Czech people must now break away from the fatal traditions of the last twenty years and begin all over again,” he added.

“ We are therefore going to try, with all the energy at our command, to check these influences which are attempting to drive our people into new adventures, the ultimate outcome of which would be no less than the destruction of our nation ” ’.

Anybody who does not know the Czech political circumstances very well might have thought that the Czechs had given up any hope of a new Czech state. But this was not the case. The puppet Government knew Czech feelings very well, even if such men as used to be in strong theoretical opposition to Benes and his friends had to do something in order to maintain some respect from the people. A whispering campaign is going on throughout Bohemia and Moravia, and this is creating economic disturbances. The members of the Government want the Czech public to know that Benes and his friends are still working for the cause of the Czech people abroad.

I may quote here a German Press report from the *Essener National-Zeitung*, the organ of Hermann Göring. Under the heading, 'Insolent and Irresponsible', and the sub-heading, 'Attempts at Provocation in the Protectorate,' it openly admits the facts as follows :

'Prague, July 15th. Irresponsible Czechs lads, unaware of the consequences which their actions might have, or who have no greater ambition than to create unpleasantness for the Czech people have, according to a report of the Czech Home Office, recently taken an attitude in cinemas, particularly during the performance of German films, which under no circumstances can be brought into agreement with the spirit of national co-operation shown by the two peoples in the country.

'The Home Office emphasises that it will in future use police and legal penalties against the offenders and, if necessary, close the cinemas. A similar warning has been directed against irresponsible elements who have in isolated instances stolen or damaged the property of the German fighting forces.

'In such cases, a well-regulated state and its fighting forces do not recognise any leniency which might have been applied in Bohemia and Moravia during the period of the Austrian or of the Czechoslovakian state. The Czech public has thus been made aware that the damaging of army property will be penalised according to German law which means long-term imprisonment, penal servitude or death.'

Threats of punishment can by no means stop the Czechs from continuing their 'insolent provocation', and if

the conditions in the Protectorate were really peaceful, why all these threats of penalties?

Naturally, the British mentality was also always being attacked. Thus we read in the *Essener National-Zeitung*:

‘The Czech people has not yet found a unified policy in its attitude to its international position and its valuation of the affairs of great nations. Some have found a new point of view, but all agree in their disgust at England, the ‘criminal of Munich’, and they call their wild dogs ‘Chamberlain’ and ‘Runciman’. Many are the critics, familiar with British politics, who have cause to express their hatred, but who do so with proper dignity.

‘In London, there is obviously not the same feeling for dignity and propriety. The Czechs are therefore still able to give articulate expression to their disgust, but this does not prevent British gentlemen from coming whining after them, courting favour in parliamentary speeches, and damning the Reich government for forming the Protectorate. The moral can be drawn, not from the attitude of Czechs in the Protectorate but from the position of Great Britain in the world. The Czechs know that. They have had enough of English morality, English fidelity to agreements and British allurements and international adventures.’

The report goes on to quote an article from the *Večer* by Krychtalek, emphasising the direct and indirect economic dependence of Czechoslovakia upon Germany, and claiming that the golden ages of Czech prosperity have been those periods when her rulers co-operated

with Germany. There had been three confederacies of the Czechs and each of them had failed. For their political and economic ends, the Germans had taken certain measures in the Protectorate. The Czechs had two alternatives, to carry out these measures themselves, or to stand by passively while the Germans did so. But passivity would be considered by the Germans as an unfriendly act. Now that the adventurers had fled to England, the obligations undertaken in the conversations of September 30th could again be regarded as valid.

In all Germanophile demonstrations of the Czech 'gleichgeschaltet' Press, and that of the puppet Government, it is admitted that there is a Czech resistance to the present solution. All these Czech pacifying announcements have one aim, to restrain the Czech population from 'senseless acts of terrorism', but, furthermore, they aim at giving official information that there are 'irresponsible elements' abroad which attempt to give the Czechs their independence. The Czech people are clever enough to read between the lines what they need for their political orientation. In this respect, the Czechs differ considerably from the Germans under the Third Reich, who possess no political talent. The Czechs were not prepared for an offensive; they had, like all the other Slav peoples, never started a fight, but had proved themselves splendidly on the defensive. That is why, during the September crisis, they could not start an aggressive offensive. The same applies to-day under the conditions of the Protectorate. The Czech puppet Government is wresting all possible advantages from the catastrophe,

and wants to build a cultural autonomy, at least, on the ruins of the Republic, until the Czech question, which is to-day an international one, may finally be solved. Even German Reich authorities know very well that a solution has not been found by taking over power and that a speedy settlement is needed which would require far-reaching measures.

In London, for instance, German agents made various offers for the alleviation of the Czech position if England would be prepared to give financial aid. The position in Bohemia and Moravia had reached a very high point of tension. Jews and Democratic Czechs preferred emigration, and one might see in the Czech streets any number of furniture vans with far-distant towns as their destination marked on their sides. Most people are taking smaller flats, realising that seven meagre years are coming. The Czechs were always very thrifty with the few small material achievements that they had, and to-day both they and the Jews must sell their houses for spot cash, and the new-rich, the Germans, the only people who are profiting under the new conditions, are buying up everything. The once strong and impulsive *joie de vivre* of the Czechs has been subdued, a great feeling of hatred is growing against the autocrats and this does not exclude the Czech politicians. The feeling of the Czech people has changed fundamentally. The severe blow took the masses unexpectedly, and gloom and nervousness are now the characteristics of the Czech people. They are impotent, while the usurpers are preparing to expropriate everything. The womenfolk, who are the first to notice

the increased prices and scarcity of food, are naturally the more bitter and they do not hesitate to express their dissatisfaction. They know that during the first days of the invasion they were not allowed on the streets, so as not to witness the removal of Czech public property into the German Reich. Women, who had a motherly love for the soldiers, wept when they were disarmed. They have developed a political sense which will leave its mark on the whole of family life. They have seen how falsely bandaged 'wounded' have been exhibited in Prague as 'victims of Hussite barbarity' and used as propaganda material. They see with what cunning the Germans on the one hand court their loyalty and devotion and, on the other, suppress the Czechs and restrict their former free development. The hate of the Germans among the women goes so far to-day that no Czech woman will dance with a German soldier, knowing as they do that the soldiers' friendliness is two-faced. The women, too, are often the cause of fracas at public dances, and are the bitterest enemies of the present regime in the Protectorate. They are punishing the usurpers with cold stares, which not even the decorative uniforms of the 'Germania' S.S. corps or the castle guard can thaw.

The possibilities of war were naturally discussed only in the utmost intimacy, since it must be admitted that there were some Czechs who preferred Germany's favour and protection to that of the Western Powers. There was no fear of war, for the Czechs realised that they had nothing to lose and that war would mean the end of Hitler and the beginning of the reconquest

of independence. Such a war was indeed fervently desired.

Even the Sudeten Germans, who are mainly responsible for the disintegration, are dissatisfied as they are themselves feeling the shortage of goods that has set in and the sharp increase in prices. Those who have not forgotten how to think politically realise that Hitler made a mistake in occupying Bohemia and Moravia. They are trying to ingratiate themselves, but in vain; they are only cold-shouldered. The German authorities are trying to favour the followers of Gayda, the Fascists, in the allotment of offices. This has not passed unnoticed by the Czechs, and they plainly make the Fascists feel their dislike. The following is an extract from the German press dated July 20th, 1939 :

‘ The Czech legions have been reorganised. The former unions, most of which sympathised with the Benes policy, have now been gathered into the framework of the Czech “ Nationale Gemeinschaft ” as the “ Nationale Legionärgemeinschaft ”.

‘ The Moravian Fascists, who, in opposition to the followers who remain true to General Gayda, completely reject and struggle against the idea of Nationale Gemeinschaft and everything that is at all reminiscent of the former system, have elected a new Party directorate at a delegate assembly of representatives from the whole of Bohemia and Moravia. The chairmanship remains in the hands of Mr Vala, who is assisted by a committee of three. The political deputy of the party is Dr Zastera.

‘The assembly, in which representatives of the Czech Agrarian Cultural Federation took part as guests, sent telegrams of homage to the Führer and the Reich Protector.’

It seems farcical that the Czechs should send telegrams of homage to the Reich Protector. Actually, the Czech bodies attempt to convert the Germans and go so far as to lower their own dignity. However, they are dissatisfied with the banning of the Jews, who were good Czechs and true supporters of the Democratic Republic and who have done much for it. Thus, for example, the suicide of my friend, Otto Freund, the leading director of the Bohemian Union Bank, aroused great sympathy among the Czech people. Freund, who was well known as a philanthropist, and played a leading part in financial circles, met me a few days previous to my escape. He had only just recovered from an illness of some months. This soul of virtue and friendliness and charity looked at me with a sad smile and asked what I thought of the future. I pursed my lips, at which he sighed, and said, ‘Shall we be able to carry on?’ This man, who, in contrast to us political journalists, had never known prisons, had considered it the greatest degradation to be sent to prison for the mere fact of being a Jew, a Czech, and a world citizen. But there were many other victims like him. Suicides were daily increasing even among Czech Aryans, who could no longer face the collapse. Many committed suicide merely as a protest; they felt that they could no longer do anything for the fatherland



and attempted at least by their voluntary death to demonstrate, although it has never been the Czech way to be obvious. The Czechs never permitted political outrages, never championed their political opinions other than in Parliament or in the Press, and usually the most heated discussions were fought out in the Party rooms of the various parliamentary representatives. And now the Nazis rule. They have even arrested workers, particularly in the Wittkowitz districts. If nothing could be proved against the arrested persons, they were released after a few days, but not before they had been intimidated. The terror started in the very first days, and the arrest and the persecution of the Jews were carried out according to the German fashion. Shops were naturally looted, and the whole Czech people has thus been made to think politically, and to take their own steps which will later enable them to take the offensive.

There are a large number of secret stores of weapons, particularly small-calibre rifles, munitions and even machine-guns that have been taken to pieces and buried. Secret wireless transmitters are also working, although the German authorities are trying in vain to discover them.

One might think that the Czechs would hate the British, as they hold the British Government responsible for the non-fulfilment of obligations. This, however, is not the case, as the Czechs have maintained their political reasoning and know that England could not fight in September as she was not sufficiently well armed. Now that England has at last begun fighting for European

peace and the release of the enslaved, she must necessarily support our struggle. We dared not attempt a single-handed fight, even though we might have been accused of cowardice. We have been underestimated or unappreciated for centuries. During the last few months we have been so subjugated and shamed that we accepted the accusation of cowardice with equanimity. But the Czechs know that a real liberation can only be effected when a Democratic or, at least, a liberal regime is established in Germany. The Poles have won esteem for their dignity and readiness to fight. The Czechs have been longing for this decisive battle, since they do not doubt [for a moment that the Poles and their Allies will win.

Travellers coming to Moravska Ostrava from Prague are searched at the stations and if they do not possess identity papers from the Gestapo, they are arrested. In many cases, papers, which have been obtained from the Gestapo under great difficulties, are confiscated and their owners have to return to Prague. Moravska Ostrava is not far from the frontier, and the Germans fear that the travellers may be able to return to Poland illegally. Many thousands have illegally crossed into Poland, and the Gestapo, in spite of all their precautions, have to date been unable to stop them. The Czechs and the Jews speak quite openly about it, and the workers, especially those in the Wittkowitz factories are openly hostile. Even the Czech Fascists, who used to be anti-Jewish, now hold with the Jews and say that they are no longer interested in the solution of the Jewish question,

but that all they desire is a solution of the Czech question. The Czech officials are naturally in a very doubtful position, since they must on the one hand play the game of the Nazis so as not to arouse any suspicion, while on the other hand they have the Czech cause at heart. They therefore warn Hitler's opponents and show them places where they can be safe, and thus make the actions of the German authorities useless.

The German newspapers are not bought by the Czechs, and anybody who carries one is boycotted. The once democratic *Morgenzeitung* of Moravska Ostrava, which used to be owned by the publisher of the *Prager Tagblatt*, Rudolph Keller, has naturally been 'gleichgeschaltet'. It has lost sixty per cent of its circulation, which was mainly Jewish. But the Jews are forced to subscribe to the 'gleichgeschaltet' German Press, and Czech business forced to advertise in it. When the 'gleichgeschaltet' *Prager Tagblatt* appeared as the *Der neue Tag*, it contained no advertisements for many weeks, until advertisements were inserted by Nazi cigarette factories in Germany, even though German cigarettes were unobtainable in Bohemia. Later Czech Banks and big businesses were forced to advertise.

In August, 1938, I met Rudolph Keller when he was on his way to Czechoslovakia from London. Keller told me that in London he had had conversations with all the leading politicians, including Sir Robert Vansittart, who were all very pessimistic. I tried to reassure him, and used all my best arguments. I saw him again at the beginning of May, 1939, and he was very changed. This formerly

active and outstanding journalist was quietly sitting in a corner, waiting for the catastrophe. This example is typical of the mentality of the Czechoslovakian population. Benes had fed them with well-founded optimism for twenty years and had given them *élan* and energy, and had helped them over many difficulties. To-day, the closest friends of Benes say that the Czech people should have been told sooner so that all this should not have come to them so unexpectedly. But if this had been the case, internal unrest and revolution would have resulted, since the Sudeten Germans were already, before September, 1938, carrying out acts of provocation and imposing great strain upon the self-control of Czech officials.

And how are things in Slovakia? The Press reported a meeting of the Slovak parliament on July 22nd, when all the members of the Government, including Dr Tiso, were present. The programme was the debate upon the new constitution which is based on Christian national principles. It lays down the number of representatives in Parliament, the procedure of the presidential election and the authority of the President. It further makes provision for the establishment of a State Council, members of which are nominated by the President, the Hlinka Party, the other Parties and the trade representatives. It has a membership of twenty-six, six of whom are nominated by the President, ten by the Hlinka Party and the remainder by the other Parties. The heads of Parliament and the Government leader will also be *ex officio* members of the State Council. Thus the balance of power between

the President and the Parliament will be maintained. National minorities are to be respected and may organise their own cultural life; full equality of language is guaranteed.

The Secretary of State, Karmasin, who spoke in the debate on behalf of the German minority, said that he felt that this constitution should be the beginning of a new era. One should forget the differences that had existed for the last few decades. The Germans, he added, had the fervent desire to make this experience of *Lebensraum* not only successful for Germany, but to set an example for the whole of Europe.

One might thus think that, according to this report, the Slovak constitution has finally brought in all the liberties for which the suppressed Slovaks have been yearning. This, however, is not the case, as the Press, especially the German Press, reports that, 'the Slovak Jews have now learned to work!' In his latest speech, quoted elsewhere in the German Press, Tiso, reminded his audience of the tradition of a thousand years, filled with proud periods, of the Slovak people (sic). The German people under National Socialism have broken the chains, under which the Slovak people had also suffered. Slovakia 'gratefully accepted the Fuehrer's helping hand and is now treading the path to a new and happy epoch in Slovak history. Tiso received a German press representative to whom he spoke of Czech economic methods. He said that Slovakia had a large number of factories and mineral deposits. Prague, however, destroyed the factories and did not exploit the deposits, not only in

order to retard competition but also to justify her holding down of Slovakia, and to maintain that she had no right to an independent existence. Then he launched upon a eulogy of Hitler, praising him for his help in establishing Slovakian independence. He then spoke in detail of the national minority question, and said that he thought that such a question did not exist. The Germans were subordinating themselves to the new state, not to be unjust to them, the original idea of dividing the state into seven provinces was dropped, and it was divided into only six, so as not to carve up certain German territories. He admitted the discovery of organisations circulating atrocity stories which were well equipped and even had their own printing presses and plenty of money. But he added that these organisations had a very difficult time, as they could not find anybody to listen to them. This applied even to former followers of Benes, both here and in America. He finally spoke of Pan-Slavism, which he rejected, arguing that the Slovaks had been suppressed by other Slavs for more than twenty years, and that even as late as last November, the Poles, another Slav people, had occupied purely Slovak territory which it did not intend to return.

Tiso has deliberately perverted historical truths, but it may be of value to listen to him. The Czechs, who are referred to in his later arguments, have never desired Pan-Slavism. I can bring ample proof of this. The only thing they have striven for is the brotherly co-operation of the other Slovak people. The Polish tension has always been a sore point, which Benes desired to remove.

Tiso, who was guilty of high treason, was carried away by his temperament. But I think he would prefer a seat in a Prague Government, if under normal conditions he would be called upon to form a Cabinet. But, under present circumstances, he would no longer be able to uphold himself in Slovakia, and still less with the Czechs, to whom he referred when talking to me as 'his Czech brothers.' We have already seen in Genesis that one brother kills another. Why should it not be possible that one brother betrays another? But it is not Tiso who is master of Slovakia, but his political adviser, Karmasin, who after denying them for months, has suddenly discovered his National Socialist principles. Karmasin is a confidant of Hitler and has never enjoyed a particularly savoury political reputation in Slovakia. By mere accident, I learned of Karmasin twenty years ago, but in the years following he only played a very minor social or political part. The German minority of 12,000 in Slovakia are the political rulers. The whole organisation naturally corresponds to the Nazi cells in Germany, and thus it was proposed that a Party Congress should be held between the 20th and the 24th of September at Kesmarok, the capital of the German 'Zips'. Here the German minority was to have its first opportunity of openly professing its friendship for the German people and their Führer. The congress was to open with a meeting of the leaders and a 'Schulungsappell' of political officials, and leading personalities from Germany were to take the platform. . . . On September 24th, the Secretary of State, Karmasin, who is the leader

of the German minority, was to give instructions for future work.

These instructions, however, would not have originated from Karmasin, but from the political bureau in Berlin, which is not very different in its methods from the Moscow political bureau. This *national* Bolshevism in Berlin has naturally set up its cells and organisation in Prague. This is again not surprising, since they desire to rule the country, and have sufficient financial, military and police aid and finance to do so.

This quotation from the German Press illustrates conditions in Prague :

‘ The first trial for the contravention of the racial purity laws (*Rassenschandeprozess*) took place before the German *Landgericht* (assize court) at Prague on July 15th, 1939. The accused were Dr. Herbert Levy and his wife, a German-born subject. In 1931, Levy met a domestic servant in Berlin, and they soon had intimate relations which lasted until September, 1935. They went together to Carlsbad early in 1936 to be married. There they learned that they could not be married. They then went to Soviet Russia and were married on July 9th. They returned to Carlsbad and fled to Prague in September, 1938. On March 20th, 1939, they were arrested. Levy was sentenced to two and a half years and his wife to two years penal servitude.”

It is hardly possible that they will ever leave the prison in good health or even alive. But these are not the only acts which the Germans commit to prove to the puppet



Government the necessity of the German policy, which is designed to apply pressure on the Czech Government and the Unity Party attached to it. We learn that the Czech *Nationale Gemeinschaft* is finally taking action into its own hands by demanding the registration of all private property, and has decided to set up a special court for the supervision of this process. The court will investigate the property holdings of all members of the Government, former Ministers, former Members of Parliament, former Party leaders and leading men in finance. These must submit an account of their property within three months. Any irregularity will involve expulsion from the *Nationale Gemeinschaft*, and irregularly acquired property will be handed over to the National Aid. What is really intended is nothing less than an expropriation of all property, which will be handed over to the new masters.

I again quote a German newspaper :

‘After a number of provincial towns have renamed streets and squares, for the most part on Czech initiative, in accordance with the fact that Bohemia is no longer a territory of the Allies of the Great War, but of the German Reich, the necessary alterations are now being made in Prague.

‘In making these alterations, care will be taken to ensure that the names of really great Czech men will be honoured. The elements that, during the last twenty years, have led the Czech people along dangerous paths, Wilson among them, do not belong to the great any more. Prague’s largest station is still called after

Wilson. The Czech-German Commission of the City Council, which is investigating the re-naming of streets, agrees that century-old names should remain. The Wenzelsplatz, for instance, will not be re-named. It is further clear that the most important square shall be named after the creator of Greater Germany.'

I should also mention a report in *Die Zeit*, a Sudeten German paper, which refers to the proposals already mentioned for dividing Slovakia into provinces, and claims that the proposed law of Slovak nationality, whereby all persons resident in Slovakia on October 30th, 1918, would automatically become Slovak citizens, would disfranchise many Sudeten Germans.

Fears that Slovakia may shortly lose the limited independence given her are mentioned, the rapid fortification of the area ceded to Germany being quoted in evidence, together with the maintenance in Slovakia of Germany's fastest land forces.

The report confirms all the information I have already given. But I should like to support this information with the views which are prevalent in Berlin Party circles as I do not want to be accused of being either biased or anti-German.

In leading Berlin Party circles, a new onslaught against the Czechs has been planned, as previous efforts to suppress the Czechs by their own, now Fascist, brothers have not succeeded. The Gestapo and the other authorities cannot successfully prevail in spite of all their punitive measures. In Party circles, disapproval is expressed with

the German military régime, as too much consideration has been given to the Czechs, but the régime of the Secretary of State, Franke, was not successful. Neurath had not much to say, since he was only Hitler's shadow and was only advanced by him since he enjoyed a certain sympathy among the Czechs. There is no suitable mass machinery by which the Czechs can be completely ruled and suppressed, and to this may be added linguistic and psychological difficulties. For this reason, further persecutions are planned, in which the Czech and Slovak assistants will be given only a small part. One can, however, no longer deny that the tension between Germans and Czechs in authority is very great. A depression is reigning, and rumours are being circulated concerning the removal of the Huss monument, the return of Schloss Lana, which was the seat of Masaryk and is now his mausoleum, to its former owner, Fürstenberg, and the intended confiscation of Sokol House and its conversion into a S.A. barracks. In short, of the confiscation of all property that holds a national significance for the Czechs. These rumours are circulated by the Nazis themselves to provoke the Czechs. The Czech puppet Government has naturally nothing to say and leading circles in Bohemia and Moravia are asking for its resignation, although most of them agree that the last shreds of co-operation with the suppressors will thus be lost. General Gayda and his Fascists will then have an opportunity for taking the rudder. Karl H. Franke, the Secretary of State, is trying to make use of this trend, as he feels that, should the Hacha Government

resign, the Germans would have a better opportunity of asserting themselves. The closest friend of Hacha is the Minister, Dr Havelka, who has already had many posts during his short political career. At one time, Havelka was in charge of Propaganda and the Press, and this period was one of the darkest in recent history.

While the Czech masses spoke of the probability of a war, and found in this a solution of the Czech problems, Havelka was warning them against this. By doing so, he has rendered a great service to the Czech people, since he has confined abroad that the annexation has not been accepted as an irrevocable fact. The Czechs are desperately fighting against the 'Aryanisation' and 'Germanisation' processes. No wonder that the people are restless and distrust Havelka, who is also chairman of the newly-formed German-Czech Society, which, according to an official statement, 'will work for the cause of closer German-Czech co-operation and will extend its activity throughout the whole of Bohemia and Moravia.' I have received a report from Prague, which was also published in the English Press, quoting Havelka's warning, and relating to it Herr Himmler's recent conference with the new Czech Minister of the Interior. The report also quoted military preparations in the Protectorate and in Slovakia, and stated that it had been made clear to the Czechs that, in the event of war, any unrest would be most ruthlessly suppressed.

Other difficulties are also mentioned. Consuls and consul-generals, who had applied for their exequaturs in Berlin before June 20th had not yet received these,

and, as a result, were working only on the sufferance of the German Government.

Foreign consuls are unbiased and objective reporters. They are familiar with conditions as they were during the last years of the Republic, and see present conditions with open eyes. They know how great a tragedy is being played out in the Protectorate territory. In towns where there is a large German population, the native Nazis in control are committing untold vandalism. Thus, for example, in Fihlava (Iglau), the Sokol House and the Bank of the Legionaries have been demolished; the workless were compelled, by threats of large fines, to volunteer for work in Germany; and Czech workers were then employed in Germany while the Germans remained at home. The schools have been converted into barracks. Matriculation examinations for the Czech gymnasium must, for example, be held in the Beseda Hotel, while classes are held in public-houses or private dwellings. In Kladno, not far from Prague, where a German policeman was shot, severe special measures were taken against the whole population, although it was a German bullet that was found at the post-mortem, and it is stated in Czech circles that he was shot by some friends in a quarrel. This incident was well reported in the Nazi press. Martial law was proclaimed, the Czech local police disarmed, and during the night many shots were fired to frighten the population. But all this could not alarm the Czechs, since they had already learnt their lesson. In Prague, on Benes's birthday, the street lamps burned all day. A man lit them, and was later

arrested. For the Czech people, this meant a beacon in the darkness of suppressing power. But the birthday of Hana Benes, Benes's wife, was also celebrated symbolically by the circulation of a whispering campaign for the open display of her favourite flower, the lily of the valley.

The Germans feel resistance everywhere, especially from the railway workers, who had always tended towards the Left. Now all the German railway workers who were dismissed for political reasons have been rehabilitated and the Czechs have been transferred to Germany. Thus they are to be subjected to a strict control by the Gestapo and the Party members while the German hold on the Protectorate can be strengthened. This exchange is taking place not only among the railway, but also among other workers. The German Party members naturally accept this exchange with pleasure, since they can now at least feed themselves. While the Marxist influence and the solidarity of the working class is thus broken, this exchange has great disadvantages in regard to wages. The Czechs are watched carefully in the German factories by Nazi spies, who are trying to establish their political reliability, which influences their chances of regular employment. The Czechs have to remain for at least six months in their place of work. But all these advances cannot win the Czech workers to the idea of National Socialism.

The new situation meant for Poland a German encirclement from the south, and the loss of a long-cherished desire for closer relations with Slovakia. In the struggle

for autonomy, Poland had supported the Slovak autonomists, while to-day these same men are in German pay since Slovak funds are insufficient for this, although the Jews have been stripped of their last and Czech properties have been confiscated. The Poles can hardly forget the hindrances to the creation of a Polish-Hungarian frontier, and still less the artificially-created 'Ukrainian danger', this dangerous experiment in the Carpathian Ukraine where Ukrainian independence has been encouraged by the Germans and the threat of the common Ukrainian-Rumanian frontier by this 'Ukrainian Piermont'.

For Rumania, Munich meant the loss of the Czechoslovakian ally, the pillar of the Little Entente, which, during its existence, was always the backbone of the Balance of Power in Central and Southern Europe. But the reinforcement of the revisionist prospects of Hungary is also a corollary of the invasion of Carpatho-Ukraine. The same fate is in store for Bulgaria, the new ally of Berlin, which is to be used against Rumania one day. But Mussolini also has his eye on this trump card, since the Bulgarian Tsarina is an Italian princess.

Hungary is also in no favourable position since Czechoslovakia was made a vassal state. Now she is encircled by Germany. The inborn hatred against Germanism is growing in Hungary, in spite of all the precautions of the Hungarian Foreign Minister, Count Csáky, who does not want to lose his reputation in Berlin. On the initiative of the Eastern State, the first attempts were made which led to activity by the Western Powers and which led

to stabilisation of Rumano-Polish friendship and thus to a renaissance of British economic interests in Rumania and Turkey. Through this, England again held many important cards in the East. Germany was trying to throw new weights into the scales by making new offers, but all this could not hide the fact that the German expansion had been brought to an end.



## *Chapter Sixteen*

### THE PROBLEMS OF THE PROTECTORATE

THIS CHAPTER, COMPOUNDED FROM THE LATEST PRE-WAR information from the Protectorate, is included to illustrate, not only the German efforts towards the complete Nazification of the Czech state, but also the problems that have arisen in their wake.

President Hacha recently applied for an audience with Chancellor Hitler to present a memorandum containing, under five main heads, all the grievances which the Czech Government has formulated against the German authorities of the Protectorate. These grievances are concerned largely with the introduction of the German language for official purposes, and also with a number of arbitrary actions of the Germans, especially with regard to the sale and purchase of Jewish concerns.

As I write, Chancellor Hitler has not yet indicated the date upon which he is prepared to receive Dr Emil Hacha. It is noteworthy that President Hacha made his application to Protector Neurath who reluctantly promised to approach Chancellor Hitler in the matter but expressed doubt as to the success of his intervention.

By a decree dated July 3rd, Protector Neurath abolished the town councils in Brno, Moravska-Ostrava, Olomouc, and Jihlava a Ceské Budejovice and replaced them by German commissaries. This step was regarded as the worst blow which the Czechs had suffered since the establishment of the Protectorate. All the towns in question, except Jihlava, are preponderantly Czech and the new method of administration introduced in them pointed

to the fact that a Germanising policy was being introduced. This process was, of course, at direct variance with Hitler's declaration that Germany would protect the right of the Czech nation to maintain its national existence.

The abolition of the municipal council at Budejovice and the appointment of a German Government Commissar in its place have been followed by actions of an even more arbitrary character. As soon as the relevant decree had been issued, a number of prominent Czech citizens, including the Mayor, J. Neumann, a former Social Democratic senator, and the local correspondent of the Czech newspaper *Ceské Slovo*, were arrested summarily. No charges were laid against any of these persons. The German authorities then issued instructions to the Czech police to remove all Czech memorials, commemorative tablets, statues etc., including the statue of President Masaryk which was set up to commemorate his arrival at Budejovice in 1918 on his return to his native country. This act of desecration was watched by a hostile crowd, and after the last trace of the statue had been removed, the empty site was decorated with flowers by large numbers of citizens.

From Prague there are increasing rumours of an impending change in the Government there. Protector Neurath has on several occasions expressed his dissatisfaction with the attitude of the present Government, which does not sufficiently accommodate itself to the German point of view, and arrangements seem to be already in progress to replace it by a group of extreme Fascists belonging to an organisation known as the 'Vlajka'

(the banner), the members of which are completely at the disposal of the Gestapo.

Dr Frick, the German Minister of the Interior, issued a decree empowering Protector Neurath to intervene in the organisation of societies in Bohemia and Moravia. He is entitled to dismiss or appoint officers for them, or to amalgamate two or more societies, as he thinks fit. These arrangements will apply also to the co-operative societies.

In addition, the German authorities have just issued orders that in all industrial concerns in the territory of the Protectorate the number of German employees receiving appointments must outnumber the Czechs in the proportion of four to one, and that all Czech Banks must call a general meeting at the earliest possible date for the purpose of replacing members of the administrative board and managing committee by Germans.

The Landed Property Office of the Czech Government now contains sixty German officials. The Czech officials who were previously in charge were imprisoned and treated with a brutality which must be revolting to any normal person. They were not even allowed to change their blood-stained linen after ill-treatment.

The Germans have introduced similar humanitarian standards at Kladno where, as a sequel to the murder of a German policeman by another German, there have been wholesale arrests of Czech citizens. Among those imprisoned was M. Pavel, the Mayor of Kladno, who was beaten to death by the Gestapo and then thrown into the castle moat to give the impression that he had com-

mitted suicide. His body however, was recovered, and an autopsy revealed the fact that his death was due to a ruptured kidney for which the Gestapo was obviously responsible. The wife of the Deputy Mayor of Kladno has received from the concentration camp in Dachau an urn containing her husband's ashes.

M. Soucek, the vicar of Kladno, and 194 other citizens are still at Dachau. It is reported that M. Soucek's right eye has been destroyed by ill-treatment, and that he has lost the sight of the left eye. All those residents of Kladno who have been released from Dachau have arrived home with broken bones, missing teeth and other signs of the ill-treatment to which they have been subjected.

Of the 1800 citizens of Kladno who were arrested, 800 are still in prison. This includes, of course, those mentioned above who are in Dachau. In this connection it is significant that Dr Niederle, the medical man who reported the true cause of death of the murdered German policeman, is still in prison, as he refused to change his report to suit the wishes of the German authorities.

A further typical example of the German method is reported from the small Czech town of Horomerice in Bohemia, where the German troops have set up in front of the Sokol headquarters a monument in honour of Greater Germany, consisting of a stone cairn with a swastika on top. As the town is purely Czech in character, it is not surprising that damage was done to this monument overnight. The German troops thereupon called in the Gestapo

who arrested five persons and sent them to a concentration camp. It was further ordered that six Czechs must guard the monument day and night.

While an exhibition of German culture was being held in Prague other aspects of the German mentality were being demonstrated in an even more striking manner in other parts of the Protectorate. At Zlin, in particular, the Germans showed the extent to which they are justified in regarding themselves as superior to all other nations and entitled to rule the earth. The following is an authentic account of this disgusting episode :

A party of about eight hundred scholars from Prague secondary schools were recently taken by a special train on an excursion to Zlin, the headquarters of the Bata footwear industry. After being shown round the town of Zlin and the factories there, the scholars were invited to the Bata cinema. Among the films which they were allowed to see was a news reel dealing with the signature of the Italo-German military pact. When this appeared on the screen, coughing was heard among the scholars and this was described by the German authorities as 'organised disturbance in the cinema'. Orders were given for the lights to be switched on, and German plain-clothes policemen ascertained, by methods best known to themselves, that the three ringleaders were pupils of one of the Commercial schools in Prague. These three dangerous fellows were then arrested by members of the German secret police, and one of the culprits, a boy named Kyml, managed to slip away from the policeman's grasp in the street outside the cinema. The German policeman

did not lose either his courage or his presence of mind in the face of this desperate situation, and drawing his revolver, he fired at the schoolboy and wounded him so as to prevent him from escaping. All three boys were then cross-examined and imprisoned. Kymł has since been liberated but the two others are still in the clutches of the Gestapo in Prague.

During the afternoon the rest of the scholars started on their return journey by train. On the way they stopped at a station in Moravia in the territory which was ceded to Germany in the autumn of 1938, and a number of the scholars are alleged to have demonstrated in a disorderly manner there by shouting and shaking their fists. Accordingly, at the next station the German secret police investigated the crime but as their efforts proved unsuccessful, they unhitched the carriage containing the demonstrators and also those who had not demonstrated. In this way about sixty scholars and teachers, innocent and guilty alike, received due punishment for their misdeeds, and did not reach Prague until several days later.

The Zlin episode, however, is by no means the worst example of Nordic methods of punishing the young. At Domazlice, on the Western frontiers of Bohemia, three Czech boys were unmercifully beaten in the police barracks. One of them, an apprentice aged sixteen, was treated in this way because it was alleged that he mimicked the German goose-step in the street. Two other apprentices, aged sixteen and seventeen respectively, were also brutally ill-treated for having peeped through the

railings into the courtyard of the police barracks. These three instances of German brutality have aroused great indignation in the district.

Several cases in which Germans have molested Czech women are also reported from the Protectorate. The information relating to these incidents includes the names of all the persons concerned and the accusations are therefore not to be regarded as of a merely vague character. One feature of all these cases is that the Germans have used their bayonets or fire-arms against those who have attempted to protect the women from them. For example, a German customs official named Riedel attacked two women at Džbel in Moravia. Their husbands, Josef Splichal and Karel Dostal, heard their screams and went to their assistance. Riedel thereupon threatened the husbands with his pistol and set his dog on to the women. He afterwards fired at Dostal and shot him through the leg. This is a typical example of what has been happening in the Protectorate where the inhabitants have no protection against the violence and brutality of their protectors.

It is reported that the concentration camps in the Protectorate are now filled to capacity, and arrangements are therefore being made to enlarge them. Meanwhile, 15,000 Czechs who, though not actually guilty of any offences against the German regulations, are not regarded as being thoroughly reliable, have received a letter from the Gestapo in which they are threatened with immediate imprisonment unless they behave in accordance with the principles set forth in the letter.

A new concentration camp has been opened at Schlackenwert near Karlsbad. The German standards of civilisation are evidently being well maintained in the Protectorate, for already this new German effort has acquired an even worse reputation than Dachau. The majority of the prisoners are Czechs and Germans from Western Bohemia, including a large number of Henlein's former adherents who have too openly expressed their disappointment with life under the rule of Hitler. A sidelight on the benefits enjoyed by the Sudeten Germans under their new regime is provided by the report that a former town Councillor in Karlsbad named Maneth had to have both his legs amputated as the result of the treatment which he received while in the concentration camp at Dachau.

The German authorities in the Protectorate continue to pursue their policy of prohibitions. They have prohibited the motor contest organised by the Automobile Club of Bohemia and Moravia, on the pretext that the route chosen includes high roads which are closed to traffic. They have prohibited the wearing of Sokol uniform in Moravia and Silesia and they have also prohibited the Sokol women's athletic sports which were to be held at Pardubice. No reason has been given for these two latter prohibitions. They have also prohibited the performance at the Prague National Theatre of the play *The Lantern* by the famous Czech author Alois Jirásek. This prohibition is probably due to the fact that when the play was recently performed there demonstrations accompanied the words of the chief character: 'I will defend my country even if



I have to die as a result.' The whole audience rose on hearing these words and began to sing the national hymn. Other passages in the play which are also applicable to the present situation produced continuous applause from the audience.

Rudolf Beran, the former Czechoslovak Prime Minister and the leader of the former Agrarian Party, was recently arrested by the Germans. It is interesting to note that in January 1938 Beran urged the need for friendship between Czechoslovakia and Germany, and during the crisis last autumn the German Press constantly referred to him as the only Czech politician with whom the Germans could co-operate advantageously. The German wireless expressed the same favourable views of Beran's political suitability. After General Sirovy's Government had resigned it was Beran who came into power and he made every possible effort by means of concessions to achieve a satisfactory relationship with the Germans. He withdrew from public life, and then President Hacha was invested with authority, and has now received the reward which the Germans generally extend to those who have tried to meet their wishes.

The German courts are preparing a new scale of punishments to be applied against the Czechs. Thus, a Czech convicted of a hostile act against the Reich will be condemned to death. Anti-German propaganda will be punished by fifteen years' imprisonment, and a hostile act against any of the Allies of Germany will result in two years' imprisonment. Lack of respect for the German flag will also earn two years' imprisonment.

While news-reels are being shown in Prague cinemas, it is now forbidden to make any comment or to express feelings in any way. Strict silence must be preserved by the audience. The reason for this order is that the Czechs burst into ribald laughter whenever Hitler, Mussolini or other Axis notables appear on the screen. The Germans hope that the new regulations will prevent Czech cinema audiences from showing their lack of sympathy with their protectors.

The anti-Catholic activities of the Germans in Bohemia and Moravia are becoming steadily more and more drastic. The measures which they adopted in this respect during the earlier period of the Protectorate were of a comparatively mild character. At the beginning of May they prohibited the celebrations in honour of St John of Nepomuk who is held in high esteem by all Czech Catholics. This step was followed by a general prohibition of all pilgrimages and out-of-door religious demonstrations. The German authorities have now begun to take action against the Catholic clergy, who are being arrested in increasing numbers. In most cases these arrests are the penalty for singing the Czech national hymn in church after the celebration of Holy Mass. At Jihlava in Moravia two Czech priests were actually arrested while in church and taken to prison by agents of the Gestapo, who dragged them from the midst of the weeping congregation.

The German authorities in the Protectorate are bringing increasing pressure to bear upon the Czech parents to send their children to German schools. At Prostějov in

Moravia, 150 Czech children have recently been enrolled at a newly opened German school there. The parents were threatened that unless they complied with the German request, the fathers of the children would be dismissed from their employment. Similar methods are being used in other parts of the Protectorate to undermine the basis of the Czech national existence. It need hardly be pointed out that these actions are quite contrary to the letter and the spirit of the promises made by the Germans when they established the Protectorate.

The *Völkischer Beobachter* complains that there are too many intellectuals among the Czechs and says that it will be necessary to restrict the number of young people in the Protectorate who can be admitted to Universities. Meanwhile, the German educational authorities have introduced a new regulation by which a fixed number of German students from the Reich must spend at least one term at the Polytechnic in Brno. The purpose of this regulation is to promote the Germanising efforts which are being directed particularly towards Brno and other important centres in Moravia.

The Ministry of Education in Prague has issued a recommendation to parents to refrain, for the time being, from buying any school-books for their children, as the vast majority of those at present in use are unsuitable for present conditions, and no new ones have yet been written or published.

It was arranged that, during the summer vacation a purge should be carried out in the libraries of Czech

schools. All books dealing with the Czechoslovak Legionaries were to be removed, as were also the chief works of Alois Jirásek, the Czech Sir Walter Scott, whose novels are regarded as treasonable by Germans.

In Slovakia the school libraries were to be likewise purified in accordance with German principles. All books were to be at once removed which contain any reference to the Czechoslovak past. As this ban affects the works of nearly all Czech authors and a large number of Slovak ones, it is difficult to see what books the libraries will contain when the purification has been completed. It is probably in connection with this scheme that the Slovak Government has decided to abolish three important items on the calendar: the Jan Hus Day, the St Vaclav Day, and the 28th October, the anniversary of the establishment of the Czechoslovak Republic.

The *Prager Abendblatt*, the organ of Protector Neurath, recently published a decree of the German Minister of Education prohibiting the admission of Jews to higher centres of education in Bohemia and Moravia. This decree is to operate retrospectively so that those Jews who are already attending such seats of learning must immediately leave them.

Protector Neurath recently called a meeting of Czech newspaper editors and urged upon them the need for sincere co-operation with the Germans. At the end of the meeting he spoke privately with a few of the more prominent representatives of the Czech press, to whom he adopted a far more violent attitude. He banged his fist on the table and denied all rumours that there were

any differences of opinion between him and State Secretary Frank, with whom he was in full agreement. The Protector then threatened that he would adopt the severest possible measures against the Czech Press if it did not immediately mend its ways and loyally publish the material which was supplied to it. The first newspaper which has suffered as a result of incurring the displeasure of the Protector is the famous conservative Prague daily *Narodni Listy*. This paper recently ventured to suggest that people should not be forced to speak German in Prague, and for this grave offence it was not only suspended for ten days but a fine of 1,000,000 crowns was imposed upon those responsible. As the result of intervention on the part of Prime Minister Elias, this fine has been reduced to the modest sum of 330,000 crowns, but the warning has been issued that should the paper show the least sign of repeating its anti-German statements, the whole of the million crowns will have to be paid.

The German censorship of the Czech Press has now been extended to the official weather reports. The state meteorological office in Prague recently published the following forecast: 'In the West cold and rainy weather will continue; cloudy in Germany with the likelihood of disturbances. Finer weather is approaching from the East and may soon be expected here.' The German authorities would not allow this report to appear, although the office which issues the weather bulletin protested that it was merely a weather forecast.

The Czech Press automatically published the Nazi complaints about the encirclement policy adopted by the Western Powers against Germany. The allegations, the purpose of which was to stir up hatred against Great Britain, may have been effective as far as the Germans are concerned, but they served merely to encourage the Czechs and Slovaks in their belief that Germany would not rule over them much longer.

The Prague transport authorities had acquired a number of new trolley-buses of the most modern type, which it was intended to introduce for the public services at an early date. The German authorities, however, have now confiscated these trolley-buses because Prague has not yet paid the contribution amounting to 8,000,000 crowns which was imposed upon the city to defray the cost of 'food supplies' arranged by the Germans on their arrival in Prague. It is pointed out that the distribution of food for which the Germans are claiming this huge sum was largely a failure because great difficulty was experienced in finding a sufficient number of people willing to avail themselves of German generosity, and in many cases people were forced to eat meals which they did not want. Moreover, the German generosity consisted mostly of offering the Czechs rations of tinned food which had been stolen from other Czechs.

The food situation in the Protectorate is described in a private letter as follows :

'The allowance of coffee amounts to 50 grams per week for a whole family. Margarine has taken the

place of butter and is available only in small quantities to those in possession of ration cards. Eggs have completely vanished from the market. Acting on the instructions of the German authorities, the newspapers are constantly urging people to eat less meat which for obvious reasons they have to do, or to eat none at all as it is not a healthy food. People are advised to replace it with fish, skimmed milk, white cheese, as these foodstuffs contain an adequate supply of albumin.'

It is reported from the Protectorate that there is an enormous labour shortage, especially as regards field-workers. This shortage is estimated by the Ministry of Social Welfare in Prague at about 35,000, in respect of agricultural workers. The same Ministry states that about 50,000 agricultural workers from the Protectorate are now being utilized in Germany.

The negotiations of the German authorities for the sale of surplus wheat in the Protectorate have now been completed, and it has been decided that all wheat will be conveyed to Germany which the Germans regard as surplus.

The German authorities in the Protectorate have sealed up all threshing machines, so that it will be impossible to thresh any corn except under the immediate supervision of the Germans. There is no need to enlarge upon the implications of this arrangement.

Preparations are now being made in the Czech textile factories for the production of fabrics from substitute materials. The Mautner Works are already turning out

fabrics containing an admixture of wood fibre which is supplied from Germany. Factories producing rubber goods are supplied with the German artificial rubber product known as buna which costs the Czech manufacturers five times as much as natural rubber.

The famous ironworks at Vitkovice are to be amalgamated with the Hermann Göring works. The Vitkovice ironworks formerly belonged to the Rothschild family and the recent release of Baron Rothschild from prison in Vienna was one of the terms of the agreement by which this transaction was arranged.

A private message from Prague indicates that the main conflict in Bohemia and Moravia is not so much between the Czechs and Germans, although this is serious enough, but between the intolerable arrogance of the Sudeten Germans and the comparatively moderate but ruthless attitude of Hitler's envoys. The leading representative of the former tendency is state secretary K. H. Frank, who is making his influence felt in all branches of the political and economic administration. The immediate representatives of Hitler are obliged to yield to the pressure of the Sudeten Germans, but they try to make it appear that the Führer's wishes are being met. Frank is utilising a large number of agents who mix in Czech political circles, chiefly among the Fascists, but also, oddly enough, among the Social Democrats. The aim of the Sudeten Germans is to destroy the foundations of Czech political life, and they hope to achieve this by removing every trace of the former regime and all the people who were connected with it. So far, however,



these political machinations of the Germans have not proved very successful. In particular, the co-operation of the Fascists who were hired to provoke disturbances by way of proof that the Czech Government could not maintain order, carried out their tasks so clumsily that the trick became obvious to everybody. The result was that the Germans have had to disavow their own hirelings, and in Brno the chief of police, Dr Schwabe, gave orders for the police to act against the Fascists. The Czech constables carried out these orders with such thoroughness that twenty Fascists had to be removed to hospital. Yet it is reported from the Sudeten German areas that the German occupation has brought nothing but disappointment. The majority of the population were never in favour of being incorporated in the Reich, but even those who were eager to be governed by Hitler are now looking back with regret to the time when they were subjects of the Czechoslovak Republic. The change has proved detrimental to them particularly in economic respects, for they now have to pay more than one third of their earnings back to the state in the form of taxes. There is also a wide-spread fear of the secret police and there is a complete shortage of commodities. Woollen goods have completely disappeared from the markets and soap can scarcely be obtained.

Karlsbad is in a desperate plight. The total number of visitors there during the first six months of this year was 7,000, the corresponding figure for last year being more than 20,000. As a result of these conditions, one of the most hated persons in the Sudeten regions is

Konrad Henlein who is blamed for all the misfortunes which have befallen the people there.

Recently there have been serious demonstrations in Liberec (Reichenberg) the chief Sudeten German centre, against the shortage of food supplies. The crowds shouted: 'We want the Czechoslovak Republic back' and 'Henlein is a traitor'. The Gestapo intervened and arrested about 100 persons.

There have been open signs of discontent also in the town of Ceska Lipa where recently thousands of leaflets in Czech and German were circulated with such inscriptions as: 'Czechs, rescue your country from the Hitler gangsters' and 'We want Benes back'. The Gestapo searched a large number of houses and although they discovered nothing, they arrested several hundred persons, both Czechs and Germans.

The district of Moravska Ostrava has become a real military camp. All schools, Sokol gymnasiums as well as the gymnasiums of the workers organisations in all communities of this district are occupied by German army formations. In several villages even the cinemas and private houses have been commandeered for ~~the~~ same purpose.

There was a general feeling that the Germans were preparing to apply 'pressure' on the former Czech and now Polish district of Teschen so that they might take possession of the railway between Kosice and Oderberg and thus speed up the transport of men and material into Slovakia.

The whole Czecho-Polish frontier along the district

of Moravska Ostrava is fortified by barbed wire, trenches and underground concrete cells for cannons and machine gun nests. The farmers of the border villages were ordered to cut the unripe corn and immediately to dig up all potatoes. Many people left the country with their belongings and went into inner Moravia. The population was not expecting any immediate danger in the area of Moravska Ostrava as they believed that the Poles would be forced behind the Olsa river, the former Czechoslovak border in the first attack.

Not long before the present War broke out, enormous numbers of Reichswehr marched into the district of Moravska Ostrava. Infantry followed by artillery marched from early morning until 10 p.m. through the streets of Moravska Ostrava and the neighbouring villages. The soldiers looking very tired and exhausted, chiefly suffered from thirst and asked the civilians, especially the children, for water. Although the attitude of the Czech population is anything but friendly, some people brought water which the soldiers gratefully accepted. I heard that most of the troops were Austrians which fact was confirmed ~~a few~~ a few days later when Austrian shillings and Groschen appeared in the shops and in the purses of the tram conductors.

All farm buildings, schools, village inns and all available spaces in private houses were occupied by the troops. Several artillery detachments were located in Privoz (a part of the city of Moravska Ostrava), in Vitkovice (near Rothschild's iron works) and in Hrabuvka. A large number of cannon were posted in the woods behind

the Ostrava-Vitkovice road. The heavy artillery was hidden behind the enormous coal slopes of Silesian Ostrava.

There were rumours among the German soldiers that a 'lightning attack' was being prepared for the last weeks of July. The soldiers did not seem to be enthusiastic about these preparations and even the civilian German population, which two weeks before had cheered the marching German troops, appeared indifferent, nervous and tired. 'Enough of these manoeuvres' was a common cry. It is interesting to note that more recently still the more Czechophile Germans have been assiduously trying to get into conversation with the Czechs, and assure them how discontented they are with all that is going on. But the Czechs are very reluctant to enter into such talks, as they regard all Germans with distrust.

On July 29th two trains loaded with road building machines crossed Brno in the direction of Moravska Ostrava and from here the trains were directed to Slovakia. While on the 30th more military trains arrived in Moravska Ostrava, ten coming from Austria through Lundenburg, ten through Brno and ten by the Ceska Trebova-Prerov-Moravska Ostrava railway line. The removal of property by the populace increased daily, but many people were heard to say: 'Let all our property be bombed. We don't care, as long as our independence, our Republic, is restored.' 'Property is without value now,' was the cry. But wealthy people were, of course, more cautious in their views on possible developments.

German military authorities had already prepared all telephone lines for a possible offensive. They had constructed four secret telephone lines which were not connected with the general telephone exchange in Moravska Ostrava, and there were several direct connections with the military headquarters in Germany, Austria and even Slovakia. Important military points along the Czech—Polish frontier were also directly connected. An exchange for the secret lines was established in Cosel. It is interesting to note that both the German military and civil authorities in 'independent' Slovakia were in direct communication with the Reich by systems outside the control of the Slovakian Government.

In Kuncice, near Mor. Ostrava, large army supplies were stored. In the bigger railway stations locomotives were being held ready, with fires burning day and night.

Recently seven officers of the former secret service of the Czech police in Mor. Ostrava, who had been imprisoned in Brno since the occupation on March 15th, were taken to Germany, probably into a concentration camp. They are : the chief of the secret service department, Arnold Zweib ; Inspectors Alois Varejka, Alois Dudik, Frantisek Obyt, Ondrej Jadrny, Jindrich Merka and Jan Bruk. They were charged with maltreatment of German spies in Czechoslovakia in 1937. Their claim to be put on trial before a Czech court in the Protectorate was refused.

Recently the Gestapo carried out a fresh series of wholesale arrests in Bohemia and Moravia. These activities were a sequel to the recent visit paid to Prague by Himmler

who brought with him 800 specially trained agents of the Gestapo. The Germans are showing particular severity in Moravia because of the military importance of this area in present operations against Poland.

## *Chapter Seventeen*

### MY ESCAPE FROM THE LION'S DEN

DURING MY SOJOURNS IN AFRICA, I FREQUENTLY FELT the prickling sensation of danger when watching the king of the jungle from short range. When Hitler took power in 1933, I actually experienced danger, but it was only when I was languishing in German prisons and concentration camps that I realised what freedom and humanity meant.

When I heard of the Czech mobilisation on the wireless, my heart stopped beating for a moment. I knew that meant war, and the destruction of millions of lives, and this I detested from the bottom of my heart. But a war for the freedom and independence of Democratic peoples I was willing to fight. When I enlisted as a volunteer, I was told to go home. My class had not yet been called up, and, furthermore, I had to bring documentary evidence of my Czechoslovakian nationality. Red tape had not yet died out in spite of all our efforts. I then offered my services to the Air Force, as I am a trained pilot, but here my name was just entered on the roll. The pre-September war was to find a different use for me. I was to go on fighting, but as my friends were fishing instead of bleeding on the battlefields of Democracy, I was to go to the democratic countries, where word and thought are still free and heart and mind still open.

I had often played with the fearful thought that Hitler might one day march into Czechoslovakia, and that I might thus lose not only my freedom but also my sphere of activity and especially my home. After knocking about

the world so much and rounding Cape Horn and the Cape of Good Hope so many times, I longed for peace in which my fugitive thoughts could achieve the calm of contemplation and meditation, so that I might finally reach a feeling of security. But I had never under-estimated Hitler. In 1925, during a stay in Munich as music critic at a festival, I had my first interview with Hitler intended for foreign consumption. I secured the interview through the good offices of Richard Wulle, a member of the Reichstag, whom I had met through the Hungarian Prime Minister, Julius Gömbös. Wulle had taken me into the Reichstag, introduced me to von Henning and recommended me to General Ludendorff, who was then playing the offended princess in Munich. I wrote to Ludendorff at Munich and announced my visit, whereupon his secretary let me know that His Excellency expected me. Ludendorff himself, who had denied having any connection with Hitler when brought into court after the Munich *putsch*, recommended me to Hitler. Hitler turned up very late, and I was asked to wait until the next day, while the leaders of the Movement were making enquiries about me from the commissionaire of the Bayerische Hof where I was staying. At last, I was received by Hitler. From this time, my connections with the Party and the editorial board of the *Völkischer Beobachter* were closer, as I professed a purely journalistic interest, although I soon called attention in all my writings to the growth of the Party and the increasing danger to the German people. The closer I came into contact with them, the more firm an opponent of the National Socialists I became. They



were at the time stressing the importance of making Hitler popular in the foreign Press. Although the British and French newspapers were not uncourted (he maintained later that he never gave an interview to a French journalist), he placed greater hopes on the American Press, although he denounced the Jewish influence in the United States. I immediately recognised the future German Chancellor and Führer, and, unlike some German politicians, I have never under-estimated him. I remember a conversation in 1932 with a member of the Prussian Diet, Otto Nuschke, editor-in-chief of the *Berliner Volkszeitung*. I warned him against Hitler's participation in the formation of the new Government and prophesied his further new political successes, based on the heavy election results. Nuschke, who, like all Left-wing politicians, was too optimistic, thought that Hitler should be given a chance to show what he could do. It was Nuschke's opinion that Hitler would not be able to rescue the ship of state, and with his failure he would soon lose his popularity and his electorate. I warned him not to undertake this dangerous experiment, which finally, in 1933, enabled Hitler to take over full power, but the German Democrats had been dreaming of other things than the future of Germany, and were occupied with internecine struggles. When I myself experienced the first results of the National Socialist mopping up of Democrats, Pacifists, peace-lovers and similar 'criminals' and was arrested, I was liberated by Nazi friends who remained my friends even at a time when I exposed myself most dangerously by my opposition to the Nazi regime. I had agreed with the

programme in certain respects and had acknowledged its good points, but I had desired other leaders and another policy for the new Germany. And, since 1933, I have never ceased in my fight against National Socialism. I have carried it on during all my world travels wherever I found myself. I have fought with arguments and, if I may say so, with intellect, against this 'spiritual trend'. I had every reason to fear acts of revenge, like the journalist Berthold Jacob Joel, who was kidnapped into Germany, but who had eventually to be returned to Switzerland. The Jacob affair had created strong public feeling. He was to become a victim of a camarilla, as Ossietzki before him, while I was critically and expertly opposing the whole regime. The Germans, of course, stand no criticism, and for this reason my position and my security in Czechoslovakia were better assured. I may perhaps quote here the following article from the *Pravo Lidu*, the Party organ of the Czech Social Democratic Party, of January 19th, 1936, although it is perhaps a little too flattering to me in its opening passages :

#### ATTEMPT TO KIDNAP DR PHILIP PANETH

Dr Philip Paneth is well-known. He belongs to the category of journalists who have seen the whole world. After the conclusion of each of his tours, a book has come from his pen in which he has clear-sightedly related his experiences.

Dr Paneth has studied in Germany, and was for long active as a journalist on many important newspapers. Long before the revolution, he fought as a

Pacifist on the side of Democracy against the Hitler movement. This naturally necessitated his departure from Germany. Nevertheless, he carried on in his fight and all his publications are sharply pointed against Fascism. It is because of his own outspokenness that we are giving publicity to his case, a case which should be noted by the entire European world.

Early last year, the Finnish ambassador in Prague, Armas Yöntillä, had conversations with Dr Paneth, which led to an invitation to tour Finland. Dr Paneth, however, stated that he would only undertake the tour as a guest of the Finnish Government. A few months later, he was informed by the Press Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs that they could not give him an official invitation, but that they would be prepared to assist him in every way, should he decide to come. After long conversations in Prague, Paneth went to Finland, where he landed at Helsingfors on July 19th. He was received by Mr Eino Westerlund, the Chief of the Press Department and the Director of the Foreign Office. On the following day Dr Paneth noticed that the representatives of the Foreign Office did not keep their word, and for this he reproached them. During his four weeks' tour, Dr Paneth noted the suppression of the Finnish workers, and at the same time the growth of Fascism. He had mentioned the increasing Fascist danger, but his statements were received both by the Fascist Press and by the gentlemen from the Foreign Office with scorn. When the Prime Minister, Kivimäki, heard of this, he asked the director of the Foreign Office, Mr Rantakari, and Mr Yöntillä and the director of the Press Department, Mr Wester-

lund, to go to the journalist's hotel to apologise. Mr Yöntillä however insinuated that the Government had effective means for securing Dr Paneth's silence and he stated, *inter alia*, that he could denounce Dr Paneth to other Governments. Dr Paneth also protested against this, with the result that the three gentlemen had to apologise again. On this occasion, Westerlund remarked that they had already been warned against Dr Paneth by the German Government. Before his departure, these gentlemen tried to induce him to cut out certain passages from his book, and they even offered to pay him for this, but Dr Paneth refused.

When, after ten days, he returned to Finland to complete the task of writing his book, his passport was taken away and he received a visa issued by the Foreign Office for a ten days' stay, although, as he possessed a Czechoslovakia passport, a visa should not have been necessary. Although he registered a complaint with the State President, Svinhufvud, who did not hide his agitation, he was nevertheless put on to the steamer, *Ariadne* on November 2nd. He was to be kidnapped to Germany, where he was known to have been an enemy of National Socialism for years. He was carried out to sea to the ship under strict police supervision and in a police boat. When Dr Paneth stated that he would not go to Germany, and desired the ship to put in at Tallinn, Mr Rantakari gave orders that he was not to disembark at Tallinn. It was Sunday afternoon, and the Harbour commander would not allow him to land, and thus Dr Paneth was taken to Stettin, Germany, by force. He succeeded, however, in sending wireless telegram protests to the friendly Governments. the

Czechoslovakian representative, Hory, at Helsingfors, as well as to Dr Benes and the Czechoslovakian Embassy in Tallinn. Mr Hory protested to the Foreign Office against this seizure and the German Ambassador, after consulting official circles, pledged his word for Dr Paneth's free passage through Germany. He was received by a Government official in Stettin, who informed him of the decision of the Reich Government that he could leave Germany without anything happening to him. This was, however, only due to the intervention of foreign Governments; otherwise he would have been arrested as an enemy of National Socialism. This attitude of the Finnish officials was all the more strange, as the whole of the Finnish Press, with the sole exception of the Fascist journals, had spoken of Paneth with respect.

Fascism in Finland is growing and the case of Paneth, who is not a Socialist, proves that something approaching kidnapping has been attempted against undesirable publicists. The Finnish Fascists work in close collaboration with the Hungarian revisionists. They are trying to take possession of part of Soviet Russian territory, and it is known that they intend, with the help of Poland and Nazi Germany, to cut off Soviet Russia from the Baltic Sea, in order to found a Greater Finland.

We understand that Paneth is writing a book concerning his case, which will be fully documented. It will appear under the title, *Dictatorship and Stupidity*. Although this occurrence took place some two months ago, Paneth has not given it any publicity. He has been waiting for satisfaction. The Finnish Foreign Office officials concerned, however, have filed his case and Paneth can do nothing against them.

As far as I am concerned, however, this affair is not filed, and, after the formation of a new Government in Finland, I again tried to get satisfaction. My last attempt was in 1938, but the Finnish Government was too busy making preparations for the Olympiad and had no time to exercise justice in a case where its honour was concerned. The Germans, however, were politically more clever than the Finns, who have never been particularly astute, and would not allow the kidnapping of a publicist to become an occasion for a new anti-German attack.

I never, however, gave up my fight for a Democratic Germany, and I was to know the consequences when Hitler marched into Czechoslovakia. I realised in advance that the Gestapo would try to find me, and had quietly made the necessary preparations. When I was asked what plans I had for the future (emigration was meant) I replied: 'Plans? Why, I am not Benes, who has a plan. I do not want to emigrate—there's nobody to do me any harm.' That is what I said, but in my innermost heart I knew that I could expect arrest at any minute, and that I could hardly leave legally. For months I had tried to quit the country legally, even after the weeks following March 15th, when new passports were issued under German supervision.

I had already applied for a passport after the September crisis, but the authorities knew that I was dissatisfied with the regime and made difficulties for me so that I could not go abroad and work for their downfall. I was put off all the time and even the chief of the political police, Dr Vislouzil, intervened in vain on my behalf.

They tried with fair words to make me stay, they assured me that I was in no danger and that my safety was assured. I explained my financial position, but all in vain ; I did not get my passport. I could have left the country with a different passport, but I refused to do so in spite of my friends' advice. Vislouzil said that as a man and an exponent of the Benes regime, I should await the results of the investigation which, however, was made *in camera*. The only thing that they could have had against me was that for the last sixteen years I had worked for the well-being and for the recognition of Czechoslovakia disinterestedly, and with some sacrifice to myself. I was and I remained a poor man and was never involved in any of the corruptions of certain groups. And so March came. I had made all my arrangements to leave and had for some time been living from my trunks. Early in March, I had my baggage sent to Holland. This precaution saved me my small savings, my wardrobe and some of my books and notes. On March 14th, I intended to go to Slovakia to obtain reports from there, but I changed my mind as I intended going abroad. My papers had now reached the Passport Office, and I was promised my passport within the next few days. On the evening of March 14th, after fulfilling my journalistic obligations, attending the demonstration in the Wenceslaus-square and obtaining information from colleagues, I returned home at a late hour. I went to bed dead tired, and was awakened in the early morning with the words, 'Hitler is here!'

It was only when I witnessed the influx of the German troops into Prague that I realised the tragic danger of

the position. I felt obliged to remain at my post and walked the streets of Prague to watch the parade. Then I went to see various foreign consuls. Most of the officials, with the exception of those employed in the consular departments, were in town, and watched the spectacle in silence. I was in the company of a number of officials of the Scandinavian embassies, and with a member of the General Staff, all of whom were silently biting their lips.

The atmosphere was heavy and threatening. The Germans had occupied the most important posts and strategical points. Escape was practically impossible, as, according to reports, troops were holding the southern frontiers and had thus cut us off from Slovakia. My foreign colleagues, who had only arrived the previous day, could not leave the country as it would have meant queuing outside the military headquarters for days to obtain a visa. Similarly, I could not apply for a visa, as I still had not received my passport, and I did not dare apply with my identity papers since I was too well known to the Gestapo and their agents not to be recognised. The nights following I spent burning all my documents and papers and notes, among them piles of valuable and irreplaceable manuscript, in the three fireplaces of my flat. The porter came to ask whether there was a fire as passers-by had noticed thick smoke and sparks coming from the chimney. I told him what I was doing, and he, to whom I had often explained my optimistic point of view, asked, 'What next?' When I shrugged my shoulders, he promised not to let the Gestapo people



in. This destruction of my manuscripts and irreplaceable newspaper cuttings made me feel as though I were being burnt on the stake myself, but I did not dare to venture into the streets until this task was completed. With my hat pulled well over my face, I took a taxi and, passing unrecognised among the seething masses, drove to the legations, which had become real sanctuaries. My Czech friends reassured me, saying that the position would be cleared up before long, as Czechs were still holding their posts. It is true that I was not arrested, and I was told in German circles that this was because I was not sufficiently important to them to justify the new anti-German press campaign my detention would undoubtedly have called forth. They had to settle with others first and they knew well enough that I had rejected the idea of leaving the country illegally, as I wanted to retain the possibility of returning legally. The following weeks were my most difficult period. I mobilised all my friends by telegram and telephone and had for this purpose to use an extremely diplomatic code. I never slept at home, but spent my nights at embassies or at the houses of their high officials, and I would not leave unless I was certain that no Gestapo agent was anywhere near. The Gestapo had arrested some people who were waiting outside the French Embassy and could not give sufficient proof of their identity. While waiting and walking the streets unrecognised, I made up my mind to leave illegally, although high Czech officials repeatedly assured me that they would get my visa. However, I obtained a foreign passport made out in my own name,

and was prepared to say, should I be arrested, that I had obtained a different nationality—that of my father. I now asked my Czech friends what I should do. They assured me that I was now 'quite safe from the Gestapo, but should anything happen to me, the Ambassador could immediately intervene on my behalf. The Ambassador, however, advised me to leave, as he was being recalled and the consul could not do very much by himself. In the meantime, I was advised by reliable German friends, who were expecting Hitler's speech of May 28th, 1939, to make immediate preparations to leave. They stated quite openly that they believed Hitler would establish a Protectorate over Hungary, and that a new wave of arrests would begin. My subsequent experience was to teach me that their advice was good. I was able to hear Hitler's speech in a Cracow café. But the journey was not simple.

I had often been asked by German journalists, with every outward display of friendliness, why I was not fleeing. My answer was: 'Why should I? The Germans are treating me very well.' Actually, of course I knew there was no way out, that I was caught in a mouse-trap. This explanation was reported to the Gestapo, and they were quite convinced that I was 'too decent to flee from German justice', to use their own words. But I had to disappoint them, and I am therefore still able to breathe.

In the afternoon of the 25th, I left Prague with a return ticket to a small place near the Polish frontier. I had no other luggage than my brief-case. I had some money sewn into my clothing, but nothing else. Soon

after I set out, a fellow traveller began a conversation in English and asked my destination. He was reading English newspapers, although it was very difficult to obtain them in Prague, and he was abusing the present German regime in German. He expected me to do the same, and was very upset when I refused to do so. After having taken so many risks, I did not want to fall into the hands of the Gestapo at this juncture. We had an animated conversation, but I avoided any political subject, although my companion did not at all like this. I made some very careful and approving remarks about Germany and her Führer. The man was evidently satisfied with this, and we went to the dining-car. When we left each other, he asked me whether I was travelling on business, but I told him I was merely seeing relations. I asked him to recommend me to a good hotel and he named one of the best in the town. I knew that I had to avoid this, so as not to be watched by the Gestapo. Then we shook hands, and I hoped that it would not be the last time that we should meet.

When I arrived in the town, Gestapo agents were hanging about the station exit and were scrutinising every new arrival. I pretended to be an inhabitant and carelessly walked towards the exit without taking notice of anybody. Then I followed my companions into the town. I got into a car and was taken to a street near which friends of mine were living and expecting me. I was to cross the frontier that evening. My go-between had not yet arrived, and I had to sleep with my friends. I hired a car in the early morning, and after a long detour

I was taken to the Polish consulate, where crowds of people were waiting. Although I had decided to cross the Polish frontier illegally, I now changed my mind, as I did not want to have trouble there. Polish officials during the last few weeks had returned a large number of refugees to Germany and left them to the mercy of the Gestapo. So I decided to try again and send my card together with a letter of recommendation to the consul. His representative saw me immediately, and asked what he could do for me. I showed him my recommendation from the Polish Foreign Office, and was immediately granted a transit visa through Poland for three days. The consul told me that only very few received such a visa. I left the embassy with a light heart. Outside were a number of suspicious Gestapo agents, but I did not take any notice of them as I was displaying my Polish badge conspicuously, and walked away. I toured the town and watched the Gestapo chasing through the streets, listened to workers in public-houses and factories, while I was talking to my friends and making final preparations for my escape.

I was to start in the evening. A storm was blowing up. My companion and myself, wearing borrowed railway uniforms, waited for the storm and the rain which was to come later on. The weather would protect us from the Gestapo officials, who were watching the station and railway stores and inspecting all railway workers. My companion gave me detailed instructions concerning my behaviour should I encounter any Nazi spies, the places where we had to change and where I finally had

to alight. The Poles knew well enough that people were illegally crossing the frontier. Should I be stopped by a Polish official, I could always produce my valid passport. Finally, we set out, and stood outside the fireman's hut. All the railway workers seemed to have been informed and had received their share of the spoils. This short railway journey cost more than a cruise to Scandinavia. Finally, a goods train arrived. We jumped on and sat down with the other railway workers with whom we smoked and chatted. Suddenly, a Gestapo agent appeared and asked me suspiciously what I was doing there. I replied, sharply, in Czech, 'On duty!' My railway uniform, which reeked of dirt, and which was big enough to hide my brief-case, saved me from further examination. He was soon off. We made for a shunting track and took in water for the engine. Here a man and a woman, Polish subjects fleeing to Poland, were fetched from the luggage van. All they carried was one attaché case each. They watched me cautiously and when they noticed that I was smoking a cigarette apparently carelessly, although I was very nervous, they again hid themselves. My companion tried to joke, but none of us felt like it. We lay in the darkness of the luggage van, hiding every time we passed a lamp, so that its rays should not give us away. After we had coupled on a few more waggons, we continued our journey. Darkness had fallen and soon we passed the frontier. There was a feeling of great relief when the railway officials told us the news, as now nothing could happen to us. Soon the train slowed down and the Pole

jumped off; his wife followed and fell heavily on the rails. A short cry was heard, then silence. The goods train gathered speed. Who cares for such people, anyway? The railwaymen had done their duty; they had landed them in Polish territory and now they could look after themselves. Many such had entrusted their fate to smugglers who had taken them into deserted gorges and had robbed them of all their money and even their meagre luggage. I sweated and shivered under the many shirts which I was wearing, one on top of the other. The tragedy which I had witnessed had made a profound impression. How many tragedies were taking place daily at the frontier? I felt I was a tragic figure myself, exposed to the caprice of destiny. However, when one is occupied with one's own sorrows, one may have understanding, but no feeling for the sorrows of others. I resolved that I would not burden anybody with my own sufferings.

I was aroused from my thoughts as the train steamed slowly into the station and was shunted on to a siding.

I had only a dumb sensation as we finally stopped in Polish territory. I had been here many times before, observing the Polish people, listening to the heart-beat of Polish life. Now I came as a stranger, a refugee fortunate enough to possess a passport and a visa. Hidden in my clothing I had a few pounds. I had committed a crime,<sup>2</sup> the penalty for which was a term of penal servitude. But is imprisonment compared with continual insecurity, a trial of nerves? Life is a beautiful, but an unwelcome, gift, if one cannot have peace. No, it was not the German

prisons which I feared, as I had known them and had suffered their tortures. But the Cause, the ideal of the people's welfare, must not be allowed to suffer. I am an insignificant soldier in a forgotten army, an army without leaders, and I must be on guard.

Filled with these thoughts, I left the van and with the help of my lamp found my way over the rails to the hut where the railway workers rest. I changed my clothes. In the distance, a lamp flickered palely, but it meant a flame of hope to me. There was the station building, and I had to get there unnoticed so as not to give away any of my helpers, whom I did not even know. I had to pass the watchman like a stranger. I felt his inquisitive glance, but I pretended not to notice it, and walked towards the exit into the town, which was in semi-darkness. I should have liked to have gone into a café, but I had only enough in Polish money for my ticket. I walked about for hours, eventually returning to the station restaurant where I had a glass of beer with my remaining money. I was watched curiously, but I got into the dark waiting-room without arousing suspicion and went to sleep on a hard bench. I had not slept so well for weeks, but suddenly I was awoken by the noise of the door opening. A policeman asked for my papers and enquired after my visa. I told him that I had arrived by the express train and that the frontier official had forgotten to stamp the visa, which, to his surprise, bore no stamp of entry. I was taken to the police-station, where I was questioned, but my passport and visa were in order, and I was also able to produce my Polish

recommendations. Without these I should have been sent back. The police-officer was very polite, and eventually I was allowed to return to the waiting-room.

The train arrived in the early hours of the morning, and I had to change into another soon after. I could only obtain a single roll of bread as I could not change any foreign currency and Czechoslovakian money was not accepted, unless one could dispose of it privately and then at a ridiculous rate of exchange. In the morning, I finally arrived at Cracow, where, being a refugee, I was under the protection of the British Government. Two days later, after communicating with my friends and resting, I went to Warsaw. Here, diplomatic representation concerning my next destination had to be made. In Warsaw I had met many of my colleagues who were now emigrants, and many foreign friends who had come to listen to Colonel Beck's speech.

My escape now lies behind me like a nightmare. All the time I was in acute danger, but all the time I knew—I believe in predestination—that I escaped only to be able to live and to work for the truth that conquers and always will conquer.

For the third time, through Adolf Hitler and his regime, I have had to emigrate. For my part, this means new fields for achievement, new obligations for me to fulfil, but I feel sorry for those left behind, and every time I see an old face, I am glad.

We forget all the political crimes which have been committed, we bury the old political animosities which we might have had at one time, for now we are all in



the same boat. Most of us had offered refuge in our country to refugees from Germany, Spain, Italy, Poland and other countries, as, when all is said and done, the founders of our state had been refugees themselves. To-day they are again refugees. I remember the great speech of Edward Benes on December 8th, 1934, when we were listening at Geneva. He said :

‘I declare in the name of my Government, that we are prepared to give refuge to political refugees; we have already established a certain liberal tradition in this respect, of which we are proud. Nevertheless, our Government has always been aware of the fact that it has undertaken a grave responsibility to other states with all the consequences which might ensue by international law. Realising this grave responsibility, we are endeavouring to secure exact knowledge of the activities of the refugees, and are doing everything possible to prevent the abuse of our hospitality. Whenever any of our neighbouring states have pointed out any activities on the part of refugees considered to call for investigation, we have at once taken the matter in hand, as we have no wish to harbour criminals. We have in Czechoslovakia, German, Austrian, Jewish, Russian and Ukrainian refugees, but we would never permit any refugee to live within our frontiers against whom any of our neighbours could make accusations of terrorist activities.’

Are not these words a gospel for to-day? Five years have passed since they were spoken, but the struggle for liberal and humane thought has not been in vain, although we may not appear to have achieved much.

Recent events have proved to us that the struggle which we have carried on for so long has to be continued, decently, with honesty and intellect and without complaint. Intellect is the strongest enemy of the stupidity from which the peoples of the world are suffering to-day.

## Chapter Eighteen

AUTUMN, 1939

THE ADOLF HITLER IDEA IS A REFLECTION OF THE IDEA that inspired some of the most vigorous periods of the German struggle for political and military domination. Kaiser Wilhelm regarded himself as the heir of the old German Order, and Hitler is another exponent of the same political idea. The Danzig problem is nothing new, for centuries ago bloody warfare was waged in attempts to solve it. Bismarck's attitude to Polish politics and to the question of Bohemia has pointed the way for Adolf Hitler, but the Austrian corporal has little of the really *spiritual* ideology of the Iron Chancellor. Bismarck's assertion that Bohemia was a key position is well known; whoever possessed Bohemia, he said, possessed power. Hitler and his followers have striven to grasp this power.

In September, 1938, came the great political crisis, when the grave of the Czechoslovakian Republic was prepared; this now looks like becoming the grave of Nazi Germany. During the summer months of 1939, the British Government was carefully following events in Germany. No less vigilantly did the Czech nationals abroad and their champions—those who have never given up the hope of a third Republic—watch the course of events.

The aim of His Majesty's Government was as far as possible to prevent the occurrence of any incident which might give Germany real reason to be displeased. They did not want to put Hitler into a bad humour, but they knew just how much reliance they could place upon his

promises. Even during the time of the Weimar Republic Hitler frequently broke his word. Indeed, he went so far as to declare at a public meeting in 1929 that it was permissible to break a promise when by so doing high political aims could be achieved. (We are of a different opinion, but in September, 1938, it was felt in Great Britain that peace must be preserved at all costs. Because of this, Czech political activities in Great Britain were strictly controlled and the Czechoslovakian Legation in London did nothing except deal with such matters as passports in order not to make any difficulties for His Majesty's Government in its dealings with Germany.) Big business in England was even in favour of an Anglo-German economic understanding, which it preferred to a more far-reaching understanding with Soviet Russia. The British have a definite, and to a certain extent reasonable, fear of the Russia of to-day. They had much the same feeling about Tsarist Russia, and in the time of the Tsar Alexander they made concessions to Germany over the Danzig question with the object of weakening Russia's position.

The political situation was, however, fundamentally different when Nazi Germany fell upon Poland, although the British and the French had for their parts made it perfectly clear that they would stand firmly by their Pact with Poland. At the beginning of September, 1939, Great Britain became involved in a war with Germany. This war can no longer be regarded merely as a conflict between two or three nations: it is the beginning of a lengthy and possibly world-wide battle for the freeing

of the world from Nazism, whose real nature has at last been revealed. We are engaged in a war for Justice and Freedom and we shall ultimately have as allies those nations who have been most hardly hit by Hitler and his rule of Force. In this struggle the Slovaks as well as the Czechs of Bohemia and Moravia are in the front line. The Poles have defended themselves in a truly heroic manner and are giving ever fresh proof that Poland is not finally lost. And the Czechs? Their acts of sabotage go on and they are being arrested in hundreds. A Paris news broadcast has reported that Baron von Neurath, who was appointed 'Protector' in Prague after the Nazis seized Czechoslovakia, has assumed supreme authority in Bohemia and Moravia over taxes, post offices, railways and justice. Food cards have already been issued, soap is rationed, and cigarettes are unobtainable.

The German authorities in the Protectorate are trying by every conceivable method to prevent sabotage on the part of the Czechs, but quite in vain. The Czech democratic spirit cannot be for long suppressed, for it is a spirit which has been able to assert itself after three hundred years of oppression. A new generation is to-day growing up in the spirit of the Czechoslovakian Republic, and the founders of the Republic and all those who worked with them and are still alive, are once more active abroad. The chances in 1914, when Masaryk and Benes worked abroad for the freeing of their oppressed brothers at home, were much less favourable than they are to-day, when the Czechoslovakian State has survived one attempt

at its suppression and has still at its disposal an excellent political organisation.

This organisation was crippled in Great Britain, which was regarded as the vital centre of Czechoslovakian hopes. But Czech activities in other countries did not cease. The champions of the Czecho-Slovak Cause fled in the mists of night from the Protectorate through Poland into the outside world. In Poland General Prchala proposed immediately to form a Czecho-Slovak Legion, but the Polish Government, which in different circumstances would have been sympathetically disposed towards such a proposal, could not allow such a move while a hope still remained of a friendly settlement with Germany. It was not until shortly before the outbreak of the new war that the Polish President at last gave his approval to the plan of General Prchala—who recently came to London for discussions—and so, after a long period of waiting, the Czech Legion was formed. Meanwhile thousands upon thousands of Slovaks had fled from Slovakia, the Vassal State of Germany, into Poland and Hungary, and Czechs abroad also attached themselves to the Legion. In the same way thousands of Czech soldiers, both active and retired, joined the French Foreign Legion, since Hitler had dissolved the Czechoslovakian Army and pensioned its officers. In no circumstances would the Czechs serve in the German Reichswehr. Immediately he had snatched the Sudeten district, Hitler declared that the Czechs were to be released from military service. He knew that he could not count on them, for even the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy could not count

on the Czechs. During the last war, a whole company of Czech soldiers, taking with them band, banners and flags, went over to the Russians, and they then joined the Czech Legion. In Italy and France the Czechs and Slovaks likewise formed their legions and engaged in the struggle against the Central Powers, fighting their way through hard battles. The Austrians had all Czech and Slovak prisoners executed—they were obliged to meet death in the same way as spies and saboteurs. The hanging of these 'traitors' was carried out publicly. Their bodies were tied to telegraph poles and boards bearing warning messages in the Czech and Slovak languages were attached to them. But all this diminished the ardour of the Czechs abroad as little as it affected those Czechs living under the Monarchy. The Emperor Karl, the last Hapsburg, 'Chosen of God', when the break-up of his Empire was no longer to be avoided, was ready to make any concession, but nothing then could prevent the fall of the Monarchy.

Now history is repeating itself. History, we all know, is never new, but history is now taking a new form, for the men who make history are new. Czechoslovakia is fortunate in having at the head of her movement her old and honoured champions, behind whom now lie more than twenty years of great and heroic achievement. Italy has remained neutral in this new struggle between the peoples of Europe, as she is still weighed down by the heavy financial burden of her Abyssinian, Spanish, and Albanian adventures. Moreover, the Italian people have no particular love for their Axis partner. Mussolini

likes fishing as much as Mr. Chamberlain, but he prefers to fish in troubled waters, and preferably in the Mediterranean. The Brenner is an open wound and Hitler's manifestations of friendship will do little towards bringing about its healing. In France, however, the Czechoslovaks have old friends, ready and willing to fight in the cause of Democracy and Freedom.

The events of September, 1938, made a large number of Czechoslovaks feel that they had been let down by the Allies, but the Czechs still hope that they will be able to join the Allies in their fight against Germany. The head of the French Military Mission in Prague, General Faucher, was, as a Frenchman, and as a true friend of the Czechs, bitterly disappointed in his political hopes, and relinquished his office. He still remains, however, a warm friend of the Czechs, for this little General not only acquired an excellent knowledge of the Czech language, but he also imbibed something of the Czech spirit. I recall our frequent meetings in Prague when General Faucher spoke to me of his boundless love for the Czech people. This illustrious soldier of France had won the love of the leaders of the Czechoslovak State. Faucher is still working for the Czech Cause. In London, too, although opportunism is the politics of the day, there remain warm sympathy for and a desire for active co-operation with the Czechoslovaks. Czechoslovakia has been left in no doubt that Great Britain respects the mission of Czechoslovakia and does not under-estimate the importance of her twenty years as an individual state; Great Britain, too, has not attempted to deny the



mistakes and omissions which were the inevitable result of the situation in September. In Paris, Dr Stefan Osusky, who is held in very high esteem in the Quai d'Orsay, is carrying on his work independently, as is also the whole of the Czech colony. The Czechoslovakian representatives there have no official standing, although the Protectorate has never been recognised *de jure*.

A great and honoured soldier has come forward to offer his services to Czechoslovakia—the former commander of the Slovakian divisions, General Joseph Snejdarek, who won great honours in the battle against the Poles in the Teschen district in 1920. Snejdarek is a gifted military expert and a courageous soldier. I had the opportunity of speaking to him in Prague at the beginning of 1939, when it appeared that he was destined to play a great part in the attempts at mediation between the Slovaks and the Czechs. He had already retired, but he retained all the brilliance which had distinguished his military career. If the early attempts to recruit Czechoslovak legions abroad after the events of September, 1938, had not been frustrated, the declaration of war against Germany would have seen a clearly defined and united front ranged against Nazism. On September 6th, 1939, there appeared in the British Press a statement that the Czechoslovak Minister in Paris, Dr Stefan Osusky, had agreed to the creation of a separate Czech army outside Czechoslovakia under the leadership of General Joseph Snejdarek, late of the Czech Army. It was announced that all Czech citizens abroad would be conscripted and mobilised and that all who disregarded

the mobilisation order would lose Czech citizenship. It was stated that this Czech army would rank as an Allied army, since the Democracies had not *de jure* recognised the occupation of Czechoslovakia by Germany.

To-day, although warlike operations are in progress, peace and humanity speak from the innermost soul of the British people, while their firm bull-dog determination remains to re-establish in Europe conditions of freedom and justice. The British Press has been following with great interest Czech activities abroad and it was able to announce as early as September 12th, 1939, that the political representatives of the new Czech Army would be the provisional Czechoslovak Government whose recognition by Britain and France was at that time already being negotiated. Czech nationals living abroad had already chosen its members, and among them were included ex-President Benes as Prime Minister and Dr Osusky as Foreign Minister.

What is actually being attempted is the creation of an authorised body of representatives of the Czechoslovak State, and this has been the Czechs' intention ever since the German troops entered Prague. However, although the first Czechoslovak Government abroad was what made the Republic possible, this dream could not be realised as it was impossible to achieve the recognition of a *second* overseas Government. Politics at that time were controlled by opportunist principles and the time simply had not come to finish with the Czechoslovak question. Because of this, the most useful supporters of the Czechoslovak Cause were severely handicapped and their sphere

of activity strictly limited. The shadow Government in Prague which had been formed by the third President, Hacha, and which was dictated to by the Germans, could not act on its own initiative; was unable to take matters into its own hands and was merely a symbol of the final subjection of Bohemia and Moravia. The Gestapo worked with unprecedented zeal as the following authentic Press report shows: 'Thousands of Czechs have been arrested in the Protectorate in the past few days, among them many prominent Sokol leaders. Men of military age are being rapidly drafted to Germany. It is realised by the Germans that an enormous military force will be needed in order to continue to hold the Protectorate.'

These waves of arrests ceased for a time upon the intervention of the shadow Government, but when war was declared, they rapidly increased, for it could no longer remain a secret that the Czechs abroad were forming themselves into legions and were anxious to fight. The following is quoted from an *official* German source: 'The President and Government of the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia have issued an emphatic warning that if subjects of the Protectorate join any military organisation formed abroad they will be regarded as having committed high treason and will be liable to very heavy penalties. Stress is laid on the seriousness of the consequences to all subjects of the Protectorate who, having joined such organisations, become German prisoners of war.'

However, all this availed nothing, nor did the threat

of the death penalty for anyone found listening-in to a foreign radio station. The Czechs in the Protectorate knew that the signal for activity must come from outside; then sabotage went to previously unattempted lengths and finally led to open revolt. The German authorities were aware of this and instructed the Gestapo accordingly. They furthermore purloined thousands of Czechs' whips so that in the event of an open revolution on the part of the Czechs they could take their revenge. The idea of revenge has always been dominant among the Nazis and they have had much to say about having their revenge on the French. Hitler has, however, been tripped up by one of his own mistakes, for he, who wanted to be rid of the Jews, has, in spite of considerable emigration, gradually acquired more and more. Hundreds of thousands of Jews fell to him in Bohemia and Moravia alone and there are more than two millions in Poland. The Jews, however, have not only completely ignored Hitler's request that they should return to Germany, but have joined legions in Poland and elsewhere. In fact, General Prchala, who was for a long time in Carpatho-Russia, has always had very close and cordial relations with the Jews.

The Czechs have never wanted to pose as philo-Semites, and when Masaryk, during the Hülsner ritual murder trial, defended a poor and innocent Jew, he explained his action by pointing out that he could not allow the Czech people to be taken in by so gross a lie. The Czechs accepted the Jews, as justice demanded they should, and in the Jews they have always found warm supporters of

the Czechoslovakian, and therefore of the democratic, cause.

General Prchala is not unknown to the British public and the following appeared in the British Press on the occasion of his visit to London :

‘ The object of General Prchala’s visit to London is to confer with old leaders of the Czechoslovakian Government who are now in England, concerning the future of the many military refugees from Czechoslovakia who have fled to Poland. These number many thousands of soldiers and pilots. General Prchala has been discussing with the Polish authorities since May how these men can be most advantageously employed. Among those from whom it has been his aim to recruit a Czechoslovakian Legion are many of the Czech workmen who were sent to East Prussia to build fortifications. They have been escaping to Poland in considerable numbers. From last November until March of this year General Prchala was dictator of the autonomous province of Carpatho-Ukraine ; his appointment, which was nominally that of Minister without Portfolio, displeased Berlin. After the entry of the Hungarian forces the General obtained permission from the German authorities in Prague to visit his wife and son in Slovakia, and with them he secretly crossed the border into Poland.’

However, the legion was then in its very early stages. The Czechs did not expect such a swift turn of events as occurred during the summer months of 1939, since the opinion was held generally that British war preparations could not be completed until 1941. With their

wonderful 'take-it-easy' philosophy, however, the British people pushed on with their rearmament programme and increased their rate of production to an almost incredible tempo. They have now brought their striking power to a high degree of efficiency.

I should like to emphasise the change in outlook as regards British trade interests since the beginning of August 1939, which the following extract from the British Press will illustrate :

'The detrimental effect on British industries of the German annexation of Czechoslovakia was stressed at a meeting of the Birmingham Chamber of Commerce. The report of the Imperial and Local Finance Committee, containing a digest of Board of Trade returns of imports and exports for the half-year to June 30th, stated that Britain's adverse balance is not improving and there is no falling-off in imports of manufactures. It continued : "For the maintenance of our imports of manufactures at their present high level several explanations have been offered. There is, however, one cause which is not much emphasised. It is that we are, under political compulsion, re-importing capital which we exported when international trade and exchange were freer than is the case now. A good example illustrative of this is found in the forced sale, which is now taking place in the Sudeten parts of Czechoslovakia, to the German Reich of industries the capital of which is largely held in this country. The proceeds of the sale have to be received in the form of much increased imports to this country of the products of these industries for an agreed period of years". Stating that the

competitive position will be easier when the process of capital repatriation is complete, the report adds: "Our main hope lies, as always, in an expansion of exports".

Immediately after Hitler's march into Czechoslovakia I—among several thousand other friends of Democracy—claimed that the only effective tool against the reign of force in Germany was an economic boycott. The Catholics and Jews, however, who had strenuously advocated this course, soon had to give it up, as even the League of Nations would not co-operate, although Germany had in the most drastic manner slammed the gates of the Geneva Palace of Peace behind her. The interests of big business were unfortunately more powerful than humane, altruistic efforts; than the fate of millions of oppressed people, yearning for freedom. This rule of terror was allowed to become stronger and to-day it has become so firm that the probability of a revolution in Germany is still slight, although it may have been at one time close at hand. Six years of Nazi Government, preceded by ten years of subterranean political activity and demagoguery, had prepared the Germans for a war, although the occasion of its breaking out was unexpected. The Poles chose to take up the German challenge and defend themselves and the only course open to Germany was to fight.

The Poles knew that the question of the Corridor could not possibly be finally settled by the German-Polish agreement of 1934. Shortly after the conclusion of this Pact I asked Colonel Beck and his friends in Warsaw whether they really believed in the possibility of friendship with Germany while the whole of Polish history and

political reason spoke against this. I received the following authoritative answer: 'We do think that Hitler will one day wish to get back the Corridor, but having regard to present circumstances and the present political tension, we have no alternative but to accept this offer from Germany. We know that it is Hitler's aim to achieve successes with his foreign policy in order to bolster up the weakness of his internal policy, but we have been given a *ten* years' armistice, and maybe it will be kept for *five*. That time suffices for us to develop our resources and co-ordinate our defences. But do not forget that economically we are still closely bound up with Germany, while the French loan is a hard nut to crack.' There was some discord with France, and Franco-British relations were very different from what they are now.

Louis Barthou, the angel of peace had, however, a very high opinion of Czechoslovakia and by no means underestimated the importance of the relations of the Republic with Soviet Russia. The Poles were annoyed that attempts should have been made to settle the fate of Europe without their being consulted for actually the problems of the East cannot even be considered without taking Poland into consideration. Barthou found little response in Warsaw; the 'axis' between Warsaw and Prague was difficult to bring into being. Still, even in those times of hard nervous strain, Benes remained optimistic in his political outlook. With the Munich pact, the political West surrendered its bastilles in the East and at the same time it threw away a flank formation, which could to-day have been used with great effect against Germany.



What are the Czechs thinking of doing now? That is a question one hears very often in British circles. 'The man in the street' is particularly prone to ask this question. Now, the Czechs have always been under-estimated, in the same way as Hitler has been under-estimated. This fact has given rise to serious complications. When one knows the Slav mentality, one has to admit that this hardy and much-tried race is not in the habit of putting its head in the sand and that it can certainly not be regarded as cowardly. The Central Powers called the Czechs cowards because they allied themselves with the Russians with whom they had close ties and from whom they expected some decisive help.

They have always shown a capacity for passive resistance and in this they were unshakeable. They knew how to defend their national and cultural values against all oppression with unsurpassed energy and the greatest intelligence. They gained for themselves many friends outside the German basin. They did in fact to some extent succeed in achieving tolerably good and, on the whole, peaceful relations with the Germans; the Germans were, however, always the ruling class who had subjected them. For this reason there crept into the Czech soul a distrust, increased by much injustice. They have always struggled for freedom and they have made great sacrifices in the cause of freedom. They fought passionately for their beliefs and with great fortitude. When they were obliged to give in, surrender whipped into flame a powerful hatred which in itself acted as an impetus to them. This peculiarity in their character has remained and has deter-

mined their political attitude. For twenty years attempts were made to bring about a settlement between the Germans and the Czechs and then, when these had almost succeeded, came the 'Solomon's Judgement' of Lord Runciman. That this was no wise judgment was proved by later developments. A wise man must foresee the future. The forceful subjection of Czechoslovakia engendered a feeling of hatred against all Germans that will take a long time to die down. Never have the Czech people been so suppressed and so persecuted as in the years 1938-9. Added to that is the fact that at last, after three hundred years, the Czechs have found still more pleasure in their own state and true Democracy. Politically they have made many mistakes but this young race has always had courage enough to face its mistakes and rectify them as passion was always well tempered with reason. To-day, these are two factors which kindle a flame in the national soul and urge the people on to future action.

There are not yet available any army reports as to the successes of the legions but they have by no means lagged behind the heroic deeds of earlier wars. In Bohemia, Moravia and Slovakia there is a united front and they are only awaiting Hitler's pleasure, the signal of the first shot. Germany, which to-day is engaged on the eastern and the western fronts, will soon be engaged also in the Protectorate, for the Reichswehr, the Gestapo and the S.S. men garrisoned there will be far from sufficient to cope with a revolution of the people. The first great revolution of the Czechs was not a bloody one. Perhaps the second will be likewise. One thing remains certain :

that the Czechoslovakian Army disbanded and disarmed by Hitler, has by no means disappeared. The soldiers and the officers are ready to hand and the will to fight is there too. In September 1938 they wanted to defend all their frontiers: only the political policy of reason held them back from this blood bath. To-day the wish is still father to the thought. The situation and the necessity is greater and admittedly more compelling than was the case last year. The Germans have indeed plundered the excellent armaments of the Czechoslovakian Army and sold part to Italy and wasted part, but there are still hidden—and I know the places exactly—tremendous supplies of arms, particularly of machine guns of the smaller calibres and also an enormous quantity of munitions. In vain the Gestapo and the S.S. men have tried to find them, as vainly as they have tried to find the Czech broadcasting station.

More than a million trained soldiers are on the watch and are acquainted with the daily troop movements of the Germans. They know their arsenals and their supply magazines; they know their positions and their instructions; they know their true strength and above all they have tactics of which the Germans still are ignorant. In Czechoslovakia every man is a soldier of the great unknown and forgotten Army of Freedom and Democracy. All the power politics of the Germans and all the brutalities of the Nazi regime have failed to break them. On the contrary they have only strengthened them in the unity of the national will. The Czechoslovak mobilisation before the September crisis was carried out within

a few hours by radio. The general mobilisation in September 1939 was already carried out through the warlike operations of the allies and the Germans, only the arming and divisioning has not yet been completed, as the men who are leading the nation cannot come out into the daylight.

Many Czechs are saying that through Germany's warlike operations, the Protectorate has really become a hinterland and will be used for the delivery of supplies. From the economic point of view this would be of great advantage to the Czechs. But this is also yet another opportunity for sabotage! Admittedly, it is obvious that individual acts do not show much result, but Germany will not be able indefinitely to withstand these continually repeated subterranean attacks. To-day Hitler is calling upon the Jews for help, to-morrow he will call upon the Czechs, but he can rely on neither of these, his arch-enemies.

The Austrians who dreamed of a Hapsburg restoration will in the end have to join with the Bohemians and so at last bring to fruition the Danubian conception, a new pan-Europe in the Danube basin. Economically they present an indivisible unity, even if the Bohemian industry and economy has a good case for independent development and could brilliantly maintain itself by itself. This political conception is really not Utopian. The Germans will, in a manner of speaking, maintain their freedom and in close economic collaboration will open up new markets for England, which through German competition has been supplanted by the middle- and south-east-European

market. The British Empire, however, will be able to push its sphere of interest right out to the Carpathians in the south-east and be able to erect the pillars of its economic activity everywhere. These, however, are things of the future. In the present great conflict between Truth and Justice and force and blood, Truth and Justice will be victorious. Truth has always been the weapon of the Czechs and therefore they have always had right on their side.

The fact about the Czechoslovaks in their threatened and surrounded country is this : not only the subterranean Maffia—the great organisations like the Sokol and other athletic and cultural movements—but all classes of the population (with the exception of the German sup-planters) stand to-day in the service of the national idea of a rebirth in the near future. All oppressed peoples have in time been freed if they have not relinquished their fight for national freedom. The Czechoslovaks are courageous and able to withstand adversity ; in one year they have seen enough of what He has done for them, of those ‘ glorious times to which I am leading you ’. Kaiser Wilhelm used the same words and we all know and have vivid memories of just how glorious were the post-war times of inflation and reparations. How glorious must be those days Hitler now has in store! Great Britain made a great financial sacrifice in the hope of avoiding becoming involved in a war with Germany. The Czechs were prepared to make the human sacrifice in order to arrive at war with Germany. What the Czechoslovaks are doing to-day is in point of fact waging an heroic fight

against the Hannibal who stands in Poland. A rising in Bohemia and Moravia could be at once bloodily suppressed by the Germans, but not if Germany must concentrate all its strength in Germany, not when the allies are gradually and inexorably approaching. The whispering campaign and secret propaganda which in the Reich itself will bring about the downfall of the Nazi regime, creates just that atmosphere which will spread. Above all, it organises the striking power of the Czechoslovaks, which even Hitler on the occasion of his march into the Sudetenland was obliged to praise. The whole of Europe is a powder keg, but the Protectorate is an arsenal. Even to-day couriers are going to and fro with instructions, although the direction of the coming revolution lies in loyal and trusted hands. As far as organising talent is concerned, the Czechs are unsurpassable. Above all, they are unobtrusive, tactful and sly. The Czech legions in Russia were as good in matters of discipline as they were in courage and striking power. To a certain extent it is still these same legionaries or their sons who are steeling themselves for action in the shadow of the swastika. That the hope of a restoration of the third Czechoslovakian Republic has not been given up may perhaps be proved by the following. On August 18th, 1939, that is to say when Great Britain could not yet have had any idea that she would two weeks later be at war with Germany, Minister Jan Masaryk made a statement. This was his first public speech in London since the annexation of his country. The meeting was organised by the London Regional Federation of the League of Nations Union 'to com-

memorate the 21st anniversary of the British Government's recognition of Czechoslovakia's right to national independence'. M Masaryk said: 'I will now revert to the language in which I learnt the Lord's Prayer.' He declared, 'the Czechoslovaks will win yet, Czechoslovak democracy will be regained, and the exiles will return home'. Addressing his fellow-countrymen in the Protectorate, he said the dawn was slowly breaking over Europe; when the end of National Socialism would come could not be stated, but the end nevertheless was certain to come. The German occupation of Czechoslovakia was 'no instance of self-determination but sheer highway robbery'. The audience cheered when M Masaryk mentioned that sympathetic letters had been received from Mr Lloyd George and Mr Churchill. It cheered again when Viscount Cecil, who followed M Masaryk, referred to 'the triumph of might over right at Munich', when he declared that the German annexation of the country was only an interval in its history, and when he spoke of the German action as a 'grave blunder and a characteristic piece of stupidity'. Dr Benes, stated that after twenty-one years 'I am again convinced that His Majesty's Government's step then was as justified as our present struggle to retain the temporarily lost fundamental rights of the Czechoslovak people. I am firmly convinced that our efforts will come out victorious, as they did twenty-one years ago'.

And in the most difficult times my comrades in this struggle in the Czechoslovakian legations in Warsaw, London and Paris said: 'We will never give up this fight.'

In however difficult a situation we find ourselves, we know that Truth Prevails. And truth—we know that is with us, as is the spirit of Masaryk who was the embodiment of truth.' The Czechoslovaks in the Protectorate are, through their oppression, filled with this profound and wonderful belief. I was able to listen to the opinions of the people in the first six weeks of the German occupation, and note their wonderful, deep, unshakeable belief—that deep humility and choking pain that staggered me, a non-Czech. True, my childhood years were spent in Czechoslovakia, and I was reared in the spirit of Democracy, but my feelings can hardly be as strong as those of this race who, with their own strength, with in fact their very selves, have built a great pillar of humanity. The determination of the Czechs abroad also suffered no setback, as little as did that of those in the Protectorate. They no longer stand alone. They have as their comrades the Slovaks, Jews, Carpatho-Russians, even the Magyars and Germans (in so far as they have not altogether forgotten how to think politically). However, one must not allow oneself to be misled by the present leaders of the 'Slovakian State by the Grace of Hitler'. Those rascals (I have had nearly fifteen years' intimate knowledge and experience of their political activity) have been dazzled by promises of autonomy and have thrown themselves into Hitler's arms. I remember the case of the Slovakian Minister Tuka, who, having been convicted of high treason, spent seven years in prison in Czechoslovakia. Before his arrest I spoke to him in Bratislava and, after his release at the end of 1938, in Pistyan. On August 14th,



1939, Minister Tuka (who wanted to give Slovakia to Hungary and was convicted of his treacherous crime) stated to Count Schwerin of the *Essener National Zeitung*: 'When I came out of prison I attached myself to that great figure of present-day politics—Adolf Hitler. I had the good fortune to speak with this great man on three occasions. Most men do not say what they think, but this man speaks as he thinks and he does what he promises to do. We have done the right thing in that we have linked the fate of our people with Germany and with the ideals of the German Führer.' Tuka, who was a University professor in Bratislava, was one of the closest friends of Father Hlinka who here received the respect due to him. But Hlinka's was no Czechoslovakian spirit, not even Slovakian, even though I gladly admit that he was a great Slovak. No, one must not allow oneself to be misled by these statements for they arise from the pressure of present conditions in Slovakia. If Hitler had not had his 'protective' troops in Slovakia on account of the Polish operations there, then Slovakia would have already been occupied by Hungary. But the Slovaks will be able to lead their own national life only in their own State, together with their Czech brothers. However, the tragedy of the Slovakian people is greater than that of the Czechs, as they have no firm and united leadership. The most capable leaders of the Slovaks—Hodza, Dérer, etc.—were members of the Czechoslovakian government; in fact Hodza was many times Premier. But to-day they can do nothing for Slovakia if they want to keep out of concentration camps.

As far as Hungary is concerned, I will quote two statements from the 'gleichgeschaltet' German Press. They appeared at the end of August 1939 and reflect the true feeling. We learn that 'The Hungarian Foreign Minister, Count Csáky, drew attention in a recent speech to certain attempts in various circles to influence Hungarian opinion against Germany. The unknown originators of this poisonous rumour, said the Hungarian Foreign Minister, are attempting to make the Hungarian public believe that Germany's intentions as regards Hungary are not honourable. Count Csáky said certain circles were responsible for these provocative rumours against Germany and he emphatically discounted them both as a Hungarian and in his high and responsible office as Foreign Minister. It was not in the interests of Hungary, he said, that such false rumours should find fruitful soil in Hungary. And apart from the serious interests of the Hungarian nation, it was incompatible with Hungarian mentality that such rumours should be suffered, that such foul insinuations against a tried and loyal friend (sic) who at the time was engaged in defending herself, should find credence on Hungarian soil'.

If, however, one looks into this question of 'friendship' with Germany, into which Hungary was forced in the same manner as was Slovakia, it is informative after a careful reading of the above, to read the following statement from the same source : 'The head of the Hungarian-American Chamber of Commerce felt himself obliged to regard the penetration of German influence in Hungarian industry as giving rise to anxiety. This develop-

ment had, he said, already led to a growing *boycott of Hungarian goods in America*, as American buyers were afraid that Hungary would before long come completely under the economic influence of Germany. Further, Germany was pressing Hungary and circumstances would possibly lead, against Hungary's will, to a tariff union. In support of his statement he produced figures of Hungary's export trade in 1938. Thereafter Germany had taken 46 per cent of Hungarian exports and provided Hungary with 41 per cent of her imports.'

In pursuance of this subject I will quote an official German statement: 'Germany is Hungary's most important customer. German exports to Hungary are also essential for industry and agriculture in Hungary. The attempts to make the expansion of trade between the south-east European nations and Germany appear as an economic imperialism, have so far been frustrated. The south-east European states, as is clear from the growing development in the exchange of commodities, place great importance upon the fact that they can assure their own vital supplies through good relations with Germany. After the Austrian Anschluss, as also was the case when the Sudetenland joined the Reich, the whole trade of this district went over to the south-east.'

As further illustration, one could quote German Press opinion regarding Rumania, Bulgaria, Yugoslavia and other States intimidated and threatened by Germany, who in the present great dilemma have found their only solution in neutrality. This, however, would be going too far from the main point. One thing is perfectly

clear: that all the smaller European states are being plundered of their raw materials by Germany, as the Czech supplies are drying up. Here again Czech sabotage is active.

How can there ever be a lasting peace in present conditions? Germany will always be out for conquest in order to combat her lack of raw materials and currency, as her budget can no longer be balanced. How could it be with her tremendous armament programme?

No one has threatened Germany's security or her supply of raw materials; no one has any territorial or other claims against Germany. Only Germany has confused 'Lebensraum' and pure cupidity.

The Czechs had to look on while their treasures were being plundered, while they were being driven from their soil, robbed of their rights, degraded and disembodied. Shall they still stand by in silence when now they have the opportunity to reassert their rights?

The Czechoslovakian people has had to suffer such hard fights for its existence. Right was its strongest ally. Now they are the exponents of Right; they have been the champions of Right since the earliest days, when the State had not been formed, when it was still only an idea; to-day action spurs them onward.

The first signal was given on the 17th September. Benes had called upon his people over the radio to rise against the oppressor, and his call was heard. On Sunday, the 17th, the workers at the Skoda Works in Pilsen refused to resume work, wrecking machinery, with the support of their Sudeten German comrades. The same evening

there were riots in Prague, in which the Czech women fought like tigresses. In the country, bridges were blown up and railway tracks and stations destroyed. In Brünn the once fervently Nazi German inhabitants made common cause with the Czechs. There were riots also in Pardubice, Pisek, Tabor and in the Moravian towns. In the Slovakian towns of Bratislava, Ruzomberok and Trencin, the Slovak garrisons mutinied and 15,000 men refused to be disarmed. The revolt lasted through the 17th, 18th, and 19th September, despite 10,000 arrests on the first day in Prague alone. More than 2,000 people were executed by the S.S. before the rising was crushed. But the Czech example was also followed in several places in Austria and even in Germany itself. They were all brutally suppressed.

But they were only a beginning!

All political prophecies are worthless if they have no basis of real knowledge or observation. There is no point in guessing at the further development and outcome of the war, as this war can no longer be localised. It is, however, clear that in no circumstances can the Allies lose this war, if only because they have the best nerves. And the same applies to all who march with them. In the First World War of this century the Czechoslovaks joined the Allies and then built up their own state. They will do the same to-day. This time, however, they will not only build up their own state, but will re-establish the rights of other peoples who have been robbed and intimidated. That is the clear destiny of every Czechoslovak and every Czechoslovak knows that though the

age he lives in is stirring, it is an age which will bring its rewards.

The millions of sacrifices in the last world war were not in vain and those made for the overthrow of Hitler's regime of power shall also not be in vain.

THE END

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